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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**THE NATION AND THE SOLDIER IN GERMAN CIVIL-
MILITARY RELATIONS, 1800-1945**

by

Donald Wayne Brumley

December 2005

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Donald Abenheim
Hans-Eberhard Peters

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**THE NATION AND THE SOLDIER IN GERMAN CIVIL-MILITARY
RELATIONS, 1800-1945**

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Major, United States Army Reserve
B.A., Western Michigan University, 1987

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2005**

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ABSTRACT

This study of civil-military relations treats the parallel development of: a.) the professional soldier and the Prussian-German army in the era from 1806 until 1945, as well as; b.) the rise of nationalism in central European politics and society, which culminated in the union of the professional soldier and National Socialism after 1933. These two political phenomena of modern Europe, in the first instance, the army, and in the second instance, *voelkisch* nationalism became a deadly combination in the Germany of the era 1914-1933. The abdication of the monarchy in 1918 forced the professional soldier to look for a substitute sovereign, who would insure the survival of the privileged role of the soldier in republican state and society. This study provides case studies of civil-military episodes in German history from 1806-1944, where civilian control and liberal oversight of the aristocratic military structure might have been possible, but liberal and socialist forces squandered the opportunities at hand. This study counter poses episodes of civil-military conflict in the Prussian German past, with an analysis of the origins and character of integral nationalism and National Socialism. In particular, the study analyzes the ideological effort to influence the Reichswehr during the Weimar Republic. The missed civil-military opportunities for democratic forces in the 1920s resulted in the culmination of political, military, and socio-economic conditions ideal for the National Socialists in their quest for power. This failure of important political-military reform set the stage for interwar cooperation between military and the Nazis. The National Socialists wanted to make the army an instrument of power via a ‘bottom up’ revolution to subjugate the military command structure. This study speaks to this historical series of case studies within the general analysis of democratic civil-military relations. The failure of liberal and later democratic forces to integrate the military into constitutional mechanisms stands as one of the more grievous catastrophes of the story of the soldier and the state.

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I. INTRODUCTION

This thesis will concentrate on the parallel development of two political phenomena: the Prussian-German army of dynastic heritage and the force of German nationalism, a phenomenon of the 19th century. As such, this study speaks to the fundamental issue of the soldier and politics in the 20th century world of total war, a matter which has lost none of its importance in a new century faced with the revival of war and mass politics. In particular, emphasis here falls on the rise of mass political movements and on fascism in particular. These forces collided in the in post-World War I Germany. These two features of politics and society encountered one another fatefully in the Germany of the 1920s, as the collapse of the monarchy forced the military to look for a substitute to insure the survival of its privileged role in society.

This study comprises four case studies of failed civil-military reform and chronicles the struggle of the monarch and the aristocracy to forestall the spread of liberalism and democracy. Thereby did soldiers thwart the evolution from a dynastic, absolutist continental Europe to a liberal, democratic, citizen-army integrated into a workable German constitution. These episodes of Prussian-German history are those of 1808-1819, i.e. the period of the Prussian state reform and the anti-Napoleon coalition; 1848 and the failed attempt at Frankfurt to unify Germany by peaceful means; 1860-1866 and the statecraft of blood and iron of Otto von Bismarck, that unified the nation via the dynastic manipulation of mass politics; and 1918-1920, wherein the first German republic made a deal with the officer corps to the detriment of progressive forces. Interspersed between these case studies is the parallel development of the origins of fascism with reference to the various philosophical views and opinions espoused in the Enlightenment, the Romantic periods and the Industrial age. These views are the foundations of 20th century fascism and its ideological effort to influence the *Reichswehr* during the Weimar Republic. This democratic failure of important military reform set the stage for interwar cooperation between military and fascist elements as the former saw in the latter the ability to restore past privilege while the latter viewed the former as a method to assume power and control over the state.

A. OFFICER CORPS

Probably no country has had a wider variety of experiences in civil-military relations than modern Germany. No other officer corps achieved such high standards of professionalism, and the officer corps of no other major power was in the end so completely prostituted. Each chapter of the German story has its lesson and its warning.¹

The refusal of the Prusso-German officer corps to accept the emerging trend towards social emancipation of the masses and the individual rights associated with democratic principles, created the conditions over the following hundred years under which the military finally turned toward National Socialism to maintain its privileged position within society in the age of total war and integral nationalism.

The ethos of the Prussian nobleman in arms stood in fundamental conflict with the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity that were gaining adherents elsewhere. Closed off from other social groups, Prussian-German officers nurtured a common worldview that was increasingly at odds with the world beyond the barracks and the officer's mess.²

This study illustrates the establishment and foundation of the 'bunker mentality' of the Prusso-German general staff to change associated with liberal democracy and its history of successfully avoiding significant reform until after the defeat of World War I forced an uneasy alliance with the Weimar government. When faced with choosing either the futility of latching on to old traditions or becoming a professional organization upholding democratic principles, the Prusso-German general staff choose a radical third option.

The military elite failed to take the potential way out, which it might have, in changing from an elite--both professional and political--to a purely professional one of military specialist.³

This choice resulted in the officer corps attempting to retain its traditional privileged role within a growing antiquated hieratical system at all cost and by any means necessary. The General Staff finally embraced the authoritarian right wing National

¹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 98

² Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 14

³ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 23

Socialist with their appealing mass following, to legitimize their continued survival and again avoid democratic reform. The ability of the Prussian aristocracy to evade significant political change (even after the abdication of the monarch) had disastrous consequences and contributed greatly to two world wars.

B. OFFICERS SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP TO CROWN

The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries witnessed the beginning of the end of the dynastic absolutist state. The bond between the officer and the dynastic ruler represented the divine right of the king to rule and, the aristocracy to assist this rule by providing the officer class.

The rise of the Prussian army, with its officer corps drawn from the landed nobility, hindered the formation of a liberal democratic society in Germany.⁴

The social organization that espoused the belief that the officer class was better than the citizen class in the art of war because of their uncompromised stature, was beginning to be challenged by the new ideas of the Enlightenment period. The status quo the privileged had enjoyed for the past hundred plus years increasingly found itself under pressure from a combination of social and political events.

Ideas of citizenship, democracy, and representative government challenged the beliefs of the crown and the aristocracy who enforced the king's rule. The advent of the industrial age and the Enlightenment period strained the relationship between the king and his subjects. The French revolution, combined with the rise of the citizen soldier under Napoleon (*levee en masse*) spread fear throughout the courts of Europe as peasants increased their demand for representative rights.⁵

Monarchs who had previously relied on mercenary armies were reluctant to train and arm the masses for fear of their weapons being turned against them. Over the next two centuries, the citizen soldier emerged, via foreign and domestic crises, to first claim his place as a citizen soldier and then as a member of the officer corps. This transition

⁴ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 14

⁵ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 66

from a dynastic absolutist state to the incorporation of peasants into the military, and finally, the officer corps was bitterly opposed by the monarch and aristocracy in Germany during the 19th century.

The emergence of the officer corps as an autonomous professional body...was gradual and faltering, however, Prior to 1800 there was no such thing as a professional officer corps. In 1900 such bodies existed in virtually all major countries.⁶

C. EMERGING POLITICAL IDEAS: LIBERALISM, NATIONALISM, INTEGRAL NATIONALISM

The growing popularity of emerging political thoughts and ideas (Nationalism, Social Darwinism and Racism), with origins based in the French Revolution, forever changed the political landscape of Europe. These concepts matured by the late 19th century into disenfranchisement over control of government and politics by the ruling class and/or social elites of the old and new stripes. This growing trend involved artists, intellectuals, and political thinkers who rejected the philosophical emphasis on rationality and progress that was characteristic of the enlightenment period.

Fascist and national socialist ideas were formulated by French, German, and Italian philosophers and ideologues and embodied in right-wing populist movements.⁷

These socio-political trends resulted in mass political movements attempting to unite people under a new type of nation and eliminate class and social divisions. The foundation for this movement was anchored in nationalism and racism with a strong support for vitalism and irrationality and would eventually coalesce into an ideological doctrine of vengeful Fascism that emerged in post-World War I Germany.

The ideas of nationalism, communism, and fascism reached Central and Eastern Europe in the last decades of the nineteenth century, just as the failure or semi-failure of modernization was manifesting itself.⁸

⁶ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 19

⁷ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 49

⁸ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 51

This study illustrates the history and significance of German nationalism in conjunction with the appeal of fascism in post-World War I Germany. This study treats the reinvention and reinterpretation of German culture utilizing Social Darwinism and its implications, and when combined with aspects of race, mysticism, and religion, fueled the ulterior motives of fascism and racism. Finally, the present work analyzes the appeal and spread of fascist ideology into the German armed forces before and after 1933.

At the heart of German fascism there lay the idea of the superiority of the Germanic or Aryan race, along with the alleged ethnic inferiority of the Jews. Philosophers like Fichte, Arndt, Lagarde, and Treitschke gave German nationalism a spin, into which Hitler's political thought may be fitted.⁹

The most powerful "national socialist" ideology and organization emerged in Germany...[with] origins traced to early-nineteenth-century anti-liberal, nationalist German political philosophy and political economy.¹⁰

These aforementioned theories and beliefs when adopted, combined and reinterpreted through right wing emotional extremism, over time evolved into the ideology of fascism. Upon implementation after 1933, by the National Socialist Party, this overall reinterpretation of fundamental German ideas and concepts pushed the world towards the edge of destruction and into the most devastating conflict in human history. The assumption of state control was the initial platform of the Nazi leadership's goal of 'righting the wrongs' of World War I, and correcting the previous century of degradation and domination of their culture by capitalistic democracies, who denied them their rightful place.

⁹ Anthony Glees, *The Origins and Development of the Fascist Right in Germany*, 36

¹⁰ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 71

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II. EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY: 1806-1866

A. 1806-1819: PERIOD OF THE REFORMERS

The German military tradition has always consisted of many diverse components that have never been easy to reconcile. This long historical conflict...is but one aspect of the fragmented development of German politics, society, and culture. The era of Prussian reform perhaps best illustrates this phenomenon of a fragmented military tradition.¹¹

In the aftermath of the embarrassing defeat at Jena and, the subsequent universal animosity towards the state and military, a series of reforms took place--starting in 1808 and spanning a ten-year period. However, the reformers were short lived, and the government, no longer facing outside pressure, reverted to its historical traditions, which resulted in the military again becoming the focal point for 'popular resentment.'

The establishment of a Military Reorganization Commission to investigate the 1806 military debacle of Jena and Auerstadt provided the platform for the emergence of several reformers of these, two of them, one military and one civilian emerged to dominate the commission through a combination of their contrasting personalities and leadership styles.

two men of extraordinary talents and vision, a civilian and a soldier, achieved a miracle. In a very short time, and with little help from the crown, they succeeded in transforming a demoralized society and a beaten army until both were fit to fight again, and this time with a national consciousness never known before. The irony was that neither of these men was a Prussian by birth nor ancestry.¹²

Fate had brought these two reformers together. They both realized the social relationship and the perception held by the citizens towards their king and army. Post-Jena served as a wake up call to those officers attuned to the civil-military atmosphere in early 19th century Prussia. The emergence of these two personalities, Gerhard von Scharnhorst and Baron Heinrich vom und zum Stein, to lead the reformers in the aftermath of the embarrassing military performance against Napoleon, provided a

¹¹ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 20

¹² Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck*, 5

window of opportunity within the military and civilian sectors for “one of the most promising periods of reform in German history.”¹³

The Prussian military reformers knew that new methods of war were an expression of the profound social and political changes that the French Revolution had produced. The army of Frederick the Great had been a force of mercenaries isolated from civilian society.¹⁴

Recognizing the miserable performance at Jena and Auerstadt as a failure of leadership, and more importantly, a lack of an institution that develops leadership, (e.g. institutions that bind the population to the government and army), intertwined their fates. Scharnhorst and Stein realized that the military and political structure of the past was inadequate and had contributed greatly to the failure of the masses to support the military/monarchy, viewing their fate as separate from their own.¹⁵ Scharnhorst and Stein recognized the following:

the gulf, which existed between the state machine and the Prussian people, made it impossible for the people to identify themselves with their government and which deprived the state of popular support in time of crisis.¹⁶

The masses viewed the state as an alien, occupying force of oppression loyal to the king, and, thus, confining them into ‘hereditary bondage;’ unworthy of their support (moral, religious and patriotic). Scharnhorst and Stein recognized that radical reforms, both social and military were needed to reestablish the bond between citizen and country/king; thus, civilian and military initiatives were born to reawaken this bond and strengthen the officer corps.

¹³Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 39

¹⁴ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff, 282

¹⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 40

¹⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 38

If it were necessary to give a precise date to the origin of the military profession, August 6, 1808 would have to be chosen. On that day the Prussian government issued its decree on the appointment of officers, which set forth the basic standard of professionalism with uncompromising clarity¹⁷

Significant among the reforms were the abolition of serfdom, the institution of local government, the opportunity for advancement in the ranks, establishment of a War Academy and General Staff, the formation of a *Landwehr* and militia, and a reduction in the brutality of military discipline. These reforms were very controversial as they threatened the army's historical role and relationship to the crown and directly challenged the established heritage/precedence of Frederic the Great.

Frederic the Great was both admired and resented by the Prussian reformers of the early nineteenth century. Many of the military reformers felt an emotional antagonism toward Frederick as the "symbol of the old Prussia that needed to be reshaped and modernized." They admired his martial qualities and strategic genius, but rejected his political and social views: he represented a system of government that had outlived its usefulness. The reformers wanted to break up the old absolutist system, which had inhibited the rational execution of public business, and to achieve a fuller exploitation by the state of social and psychological energies that the Frederician class structure had repressed.¹⁸

The overriding goal of reformers was "a basic constitutional reform which, as a minimum, would bring a written constitution and some form of national representation."¹⁹ Reformers believed that the "duty of military service should be balanced by the right to some share in the politics of the state...reformed army as a school for teaching the people how to bear civic responsibility."²⁰ Opponents viewed the constitutional change as having negative repercussions among other German states.

Moving swiftly while the memory of Jena was still present, Scharnhorst and Stein sought to reorganize the army. The importance of this plan was to "put an end to the

¹⁷ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 30

¹⁸ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 21

¹⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 71

²⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 71

aristocratic monopoly of the officer corps.”²¹ In order to accomplish this, they sought to open the officer corps to promising applicants of the middle class and establish educational standards, which would serve as the “decisive fact in securing a commission.”²² These proposals were dismissed out of hand by the aristocracy who claimed that,

learning kills character [and would] destroy the intimate relationship
...between sovereign and his officers.²³

Additionally, these reforms although bitterly opposed by the army, aristocracy and the king, (whose complacency and waffling were notorious), initially succeeded due in part to the prevailing attitude concerning the aristocracy’s embarrassing performance at Jena.

In 1809 Scharnhorst reorganized the War Ministry, he created a special division that was charged with the plans for organization and mobilization and with the peacetime training and education of the army.²⁴

Thus, by 1810, with the exception of two remaining military schools, the rest had been replaced. ‘Old school’ officers regarded this as an attack on their class’ special position within the monarchy. The overriding belief was echoed by General York who stated, “If your royal highness deprives me and my children of our rights, what foundation is left for your own,”²⁵ growing sentiments of this type resulted in the royal order of March 1809, clarifying the king’s right to appoint officers, which in turn, implied to reformers the king’s intent to maintain his royal rights.

Another proposed reform and its intention, was the formation of a civil guard where all qualified males not in the army would serve up to age 39. This initiative was crucial to the beliefs of Scharnhorst and Stein who felt that “universality of responsibility for service in war”²⁶ would bind the population to the government and army, thus

²¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 42

²² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 43

²³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 44

²⁴ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 283

²⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 44

²⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 47

intertwining their fates. This would also serve as a ‘school of the nation’ in which the indoctrination of citizens in regards to duty and country would transpire, while preparing them for “intelligent participation in public life.”²⁷ Articles of war were drawn up which defined guidelines for discipline and greatly protected individual soldiers from harsh disciplinary and, often, arbitrary punishment. The king continued to ‘waffle’ on recommendations for reform and viewed these proposed innovations as “dangerous French ideas”²⁸ and potentially harmful to his authority.

The king, during this period, demonstrated indecisiveness on several occasions in both domestic and foreign policy. His passivity toward the French, by acquiescing to their demands in 1809, caused massive resignations in his officer corps, including Carl von Clausewitz. Then in 1812, he signed the Franco-Prussian treaty; thus undermining the actions taken by reformers to strengthen the army since 1807. These actions could have further destabilized the army if not for the war of liberation in 1813, which served as a testing ground for initiatives implemented by reformers.²⁹ Gneisenau’s long held belief, shared by his fellow reformers, that once the masses had “saved the state [they] would be entitled to a constitution and all the other privileges of representative government,”³⁰ seemed to be coming true. “Reforms which had been primarily designed to appease the bourgeoisie and to reconcile it to the army had achieved their purpose.”³¹

However, while the reformers were treated as heroes, the manner in which some conducted themselves strained their relationship with the king, e.g. defiance of orders, the pursuit of nationalistic agendas that king had no interests in, etc. This persistent attitude of some reformers also jeopardized respect for the king amongst fellow European rulers and, the Tsar even made reference of having to save the Prussian king from his army.³²

²⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 48

²⁸ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 49

²⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 60

³⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 56

³¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 62

³² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 67

[Their actions] had made them [Scharnhorst, Stein and Gneisenau] suspect in the conservative atmosphere of the Prussian or, for that matter, of the Austrian and Russian courts.³³

The aristocracy and officer corps capitalized on these events and began to portray reformers as bringing revolution to the country and, that civil and military reforms would destroy the monarchy and upset the dynastic balance. This created a war of the ‘property less against the propertied.’ The conflict between Wilhelm von Humboldt and Chancellor August von Hardenberg over the *Landwehr*, which was viewed by its critics as politically unreliable due to the perceived nationalist aspirations of its leaders, is but one example. Although the *Landwehr*’s performance was deified in the ‘War of Liberation’ and had been ‘praised at the expense of the line army,’ which was viewed as a ‘tool of despotism,’ by 1819 with its efficiency severely deteriorated by four years of peace; the time for the reaction party to make its move was at hand. The reformers were outmaneuvered and the reaction party oversaw their removal through retirements and resignations; resulting in the reversal of their progress towards reconciliation of the army and civil society.³⁴

The dream of the Prussian military reformers of creating a true citizens army was frustrated by the political reaction after 1815. The legacy of their strategic and tactical knowledge fared better, though even here the old school scored certain successes.³⁵

1. Analysis

The great reforms of Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Grolmann, and the Prussian Military Commission mark the true beginning of the military profession in the West. The work of these leaders reflected an undercurrent of thought, discussion, and writing which appeared in the Prussian Army in the last decade of the previous century and which burst forth after Jena. This movement made a sharp break with the eighteenth century.³⁶

Prior to the emergence of the reformers, the aristocracy had a stranglehold on military education and subsequent appointment to the officer corps throughout Europe.

³³ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 285

³⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 75

³⁵ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 282

³⁶ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 31

The few who had managed to penetrate the officer corps were specialist in their field, not leaders of men.

Admission to the schools of preliminary military education, founded in both France and Prussia in the middle of the eighteenth century, was limited to aristocrats... In Prussia in 1806 there were only 700 non-nobles in a corps of 7,100 and virtually all of these were in the technical branches.³⁷

The actions of the reformers was to forever change the composition of the officer corps the reformers had utilized this unique opportunity of national defeat to implement the foundations of reform by allowing the middle class to become officers; further, the reforms established officer education standards, the Ministry of War department, and the General Staff, and amended military justice by abolishing corporal punishment. These actions greatly contributed to the success enjoyed in the War of Liberation, such as: the performance of staff and middle class officers through various campaigns in 1813, the support of military and king by populace, and the administrative unity of the army.

The spirit behind the new army, which proved itself at Lepzig in 1813 and then at Waterloo nearly two years later, was the spirit which had pushed through Stein's domestic reforms, most notably the abolition of serfdom; and it was a spirit actively opposed by the traditional masters of Prussia, the Junker landowners, who had presided over their country's humiliation and were soon most to benefit from its recovery.³⁸

However, these reforms were viewed by the army as an attempt by radicals to dilute their authority and rightful role in support of the crown's divine authority and natural order.

Scharnhorst and Gneisenau had been politicians as much as generals and their military reforms aimed directly at a reform of the whole life of the nation.³⁹

Therefore, the reformers were marginalized and suffered a reversal of fortune in 1819 leading to the following serious setbacks:

³⁷ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 22

³⁸ Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 5

³⁹ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 285

Frederick William was free with promises of a constitution, but he managed to drift along with those promises unfulfilled for twenty-five uninspired years.⁴⁰

The revival of 'old provincial estates' dominated by landed aristocracy instead of the constitution. The effect was a "renewal of the old alliance between the crown and the nobility against the social and political aspirations of the rest of the people"⁴¹

There was also a recrudescence of the privileged position of the Prussian gentry in government and army, and the Junker class continued to monopolize the officers positions.⁴²

Social and education reforms weakened, [and were] addressed again in 1836 and the antipathy between the army and the people reemerged post 1819.⁴³

Clausewitz's critique of the growing narrowness and one-sided professionalism in the education of Prussian officers at this time indicated the shape of the continuing conflict between conservative and liberal forces in 1819. But before Clausewitz's superiors acted on his memorandum, the course of politics in Germany led to the triumph of ultraconservatism over moderates and liberals.⁴⁴

This policy resulted in the middle and lower-classes beginning the process of an organized liberal movement and constitutional reform, and a desire for foreign policy to satisfy the nationalists' ambitions for a unified nation. The army's actions only served to validate these actions. The alliance with Austria was viewed as an attempt to suppress growing liberal agitation associated with emerging nationalistic and democratic movements, rather than fulfill national aspirations. In addition, the army had begun to be viewed as a weapon for domestic suppression against citizens, rather than a defense against foreigners. The result was that over the next 20 years, the progress Scharnhorst had made in reconciling military and civilian society had been destroyed; resulting in the

⁴⁰ Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 6

⁴¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 77

⁴² Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 282

⁴³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 79

⁴⁴ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 21

military, again, being viewed as the main barrier to social progress.⁴⁵ Subsequently, the military continued to reinforce its entrenched position with actions that would have severe ramifications until the mid-twentieth century.

The absolutist structure of the Prussian government, however, made it possible to divide military responsibility under the supreme command of the king. In 1821, the chief of the general staff was made the highest advisor of the king in matters of warfare, while the War Ministry was restricted to the political and administrative control of the army. This decision was of far-reaching consequence, since it enabled the general staff gradually to take a leading hand in military affairs, not merely after the outbreak of war, but also in the preparation and initial phase of a war.⁴⁶

This study now turns to the emerging groundswell of mass political ideas during the early nineteenth century and their coalescing and ensuing impact on social institutions by the end of the century.

B. NATIONALISM AND FASCISM

“New political tendencies have normally appeared earlier in France than in almost anywhere else in the world.”⁴⁷ Zeev Sternhell claims that

all the ideas found in fascism first appeared in France; the fusion of radical nationalism with revolutionary and semi-collectivist socio-economic aspiration first occurred there along with the rejection of parliamentarianism in support of nationalism.⁴⁸

The British Industrial revolution transformed the Western European core of the world economy. Conjointly, the French Revolution prepared the ground for major sociopolitical changes.⁴⁹

Though the rationalist and equalitarian aspect of the French revolution would later be violently rejected by 20th century fascist, certain aspects of the fascist form of revolutionary nationalism were themselves pioneered in

⁴⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 89

⁴⁶ Hajo Holborn, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Prusso-German School: Moltke and the Rise of the General Staff*, 284

⁴⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 41

⁴⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 291

⁴⁹ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 3

the French revolution, new civic festivals and rituals; and formed its own cult of youth, patriotic death, and martyrdom.⁵⁰

Two linkages to 19th century France are identified as the origins of a fascist-type regime. August Thalheimer and Otto Bauer developed a theory that fascism was an updated version of Bonapartism,⁵¹ while Ernst Nolte believed that ‘Action Francaise’ was the “beginning of fascism in Europe.”⁵² Some others believed that Bonapartism was the “first modern syncretic regime with fascist tendencies,”⁵³ while still other groups felt that it “seemed more related to several of the right wing, primarily non-fascist systems of the period between the world wars.”⁵⁴

Many believe Action Francaise was the true origin, because it provided a truer reflection of modern fascism:

achieved a new synthesis of all 19th century traditionalist ideas, combining them with radical nationalism, converting monarchism from a dynastic principle into a complete system of integral nationalism, authoritarian, anti-Semitic, exclusivist, and intolerance⁵⁵

Therefore, to understand the roots of fascism, we need to explore the theories and ideas and counter arguments from writers and intellectuals of the romantic era who disputed some of the beliefs of the enlightenment period.

To truly understand fascism, you have to first comprehend nationalism and its perceived effect upon the hierarchy in Germany during the 19th century. Nationalism “exerted one of the two or three strongest kinds of political appeals known to modern times.”⁵⁶ Radical nationalism was first expressed in the Jacobin period of the French revolution and shared some of the characteristics of fascism; strong individual leader, justification of extreme violence, and the goal of achieving a new man and a new kind of

⁵⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 36

⁵¹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 125

⁵² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 125

⁵³ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 125

⁵⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 42

⁵⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 47

⁵⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 36

citizen.⁵⁷ These characteristics coupled with aggressive tendencies, to not only preserve an idea or state, but also to defend and unite against common enemies; foreign and domestic, real or imagined, was the incubator for the indoctrination of xenophobic anti-communist and racial prejudices espoused by fascism. However,

fascism could not become a major force in countries where a reasonable significant nationalist ideology or movement had not preceded it at least by half a generation, if not more. Such radical and intense a doctrine could gain momentum only as the second stag in ongoing nationalist agitation and mobilization.⁵⁸

These conditions had developed throughout European society over the past generation and were becoming ever more vocal throughout the German states.

In Germany and throughout northern and western Europe, the middle class promoted the founding of societies, association and pressure groups, rallying an increasingly large section of society behind national slogans, despite bans and obstruction efforts imposed by the authorities.⁵⁹ However, it wasn't until the Rhine crisis of 1840 that German nationalism first manifested itself significantly. Hagen Schultz noted that this

nationalism of the masses was manifested for the first time as a distinctive factor in politics, indeed as an issue of the utmost significance.⁶⁰

Further evidence of the merging of romantic ideas with mythical glories by the middle class is again highlighted by Schultz:

the minds of the groups who propagated the idea of a German national state, for the most part the liberal middle class, had for generations past, been conditioned by images and myths of a regressive romantic utopian resurrection of alleged medieval glories of the empire.⁶¹

Additionally, this period (1840) “represented a historical dividing line...it had now become obvious that there was no viable alternative to the nation state.”⁶² Max Weber argued that

⁵⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 35-36

⁵⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 489

⁵⁹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 191

⁶⁰ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 193

⁶¹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 225

⁶² Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 194

the nation is not content to be merely the sum total of all its members: the people are identical with the nation, which sees itself not just as a cultural, but also as a political entity.⁶³

Prussia served as a historical model for the goal of 'uniting all Germans,' and the rationalization of the German national state through the agency of Prussia was part of the 'divine cosmic order'; it is within the context of this struggle that the origins of German fascism are found. The German people believed in the 19th century that they were not

suited to confinement in a fractured confederation of German states, but had been limited up to that point, because they could not project their influence and political energies abroad.⁶⁴

By the 1880-90s the spread of nationalism in Germany society equated to the proliferation of numerous Germanic associations. These organizations became more militant and aggressive in their avocation of authoritarian and racist policies to cure society's ills.⁶⁵ Max Nordau's *Entartung* (Degeneration, 1892) helped fuel nationalism and imperialism as the cure for this decadence.⁶⁶

The people who most strongly promoted imperialistic adventure were the middle class and liberals, who were intent on expansion and global status for Germany.⁶⁷ Thus, nationalism evolved into imperialism, when citizens urged their government to expand their power and influence beyond their boundaries, (e.g. goal of German unification) and compete for foreign empires.⁶⁸

The small continent of Europe seemed too cramped for the enormous economic and political potential that was being generated in Germany. This confinement within the scope of modest domestic developments and saturated markets was felt by German middle class as degrading and discriminatory in comparison to their European neighbors.⁶⁹

⁶³ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 197

⁶⁴ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 168

⁶⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 49

⁶⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 30

⁶⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 251

⁶⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 36

⁶⁹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 249

Fascism and Nazism entailed a right-wing revolution of nations that had experienced a troubled and delayed process of national emancipation and that were unable to create their nation-states at the same time as a major Western powers.⁷⁰

These events paralleled the movement towards the political right, whose ideologies became increasingly more 'aggressive, authoritarian, and intolerant', challenging individual liberalism by the end of the century. These escalating goals and ambitions of European nations eventually collided in the conflict known as World War I. However, before the Great War, a series of uprisings and revolutions were fueled by the budding promise of these new socio-political forces. 1848 was a pivotal year for the European continent; Prussia and her Monarchy were not spared the turbulent forces of democracy sweeping Europe.

Prussia initiated a professional officer corps after its defeat in 1806 and started a second wave of professionalization following its humiliation by Denmark in 1848.⁷¹

⁷⁰ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 74

⁷¹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 33

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III. MID NINETEENTH CENTURY

A. 1848: ROLE OF THE ARMY AND KING DURING POLITICAL UNREST

after Waterloo the social and political (but not industrial) development of Prussia regressed until in 1848, the year of revolutions, the people took things into their own hands and came very close to overthrowing the dynasty.⁷²

The European Revolutions of 1848 signified the awakening of diverse populations to a national consciousness. These events forever changed the relationship of the German army, monarch, and the government. Several factors combined, again, to present opportunities for the transformation of the Prussian army into an instrument of the state with allegiance to the constitution. The rise of nationalism and the revolution in Paris spread to other European capitals and, contributed to the military's violent repression to curtail ongoing riots. The army's belief in the inevitability of future domestic disturbances by forces of democracy and questionable reliability of the king promoted their 'bunker mentality.' The election of the National Assembly and, attempts by the left to replace the regular army with the *Volkswehr*, further promoted the belief in the jeopardy of the aristocracy's divine military role. The inability of liberals and democrats to, cooperate on reforming the army within a narrow window of opportunity, allowed the army to escape any significant reforms.

In February of 1848, the overthrow of Louis Philippe [France], combined with the subsequent "conduct of the troops in the city [Berlin] and, the attitude of their leaders which precipitated the rising of 18 March,"⁷³ greatly contributed to the volatility of the situation. The military overreaction towards civilians created a crisis in Berlin;

where revolution in Prussia was inevitable or not, the men governing Prussia...did everything to make it so.⁷⁴

The army's deployment of troops and their over enthusiastic use of force during riots to quell disturbances made the "uniform an object of hatred to working classes."⁷⁵

⁷² Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 6

⁷³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 82

⁷⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 92

⁷⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 92

The army had for so long been detested as a symbol of absolutism and repression that it required no more than the least show of force to infuriate the crowds.⁷⁶

The army believed that the masses must be made to see that they can accomplish nothing against the military and, that the;

significant characteristic of military thinking... remorseless employment of military force [was the] only means of preventing repetition of Paris experience in Berlin.⁷⁷

Thus, it had been military abuses, which had touched off the uprisings that took place in Berlin. The result of this crisis was the solidification of opposing beliefs by the king and his closest military advisors against the middle and lower classes; the former being a “belief by the highest ranks of officer corps and especially among those officers closest to the king that ‘March days’ were the prelude to revolutionary renewal in the near future.”⁷⁸ While the latter, inspired by nationalism and the burgeoning industrial revolution, felt the era of political and social reform was at hand.

throughout the Germanies and Austria the real drive behind the revolutions came from the new middle classes: it was they who turned against absolutist rule, demanded a voice in government, and at the same time discovered in nationalism, in the concept of the nation of which they formed an indisputable part, a cause to set against the principle of aristocratic privilege that so evidently transcend all considerations of nationhood.⁷⁹

The after effects of 1848 resulted in the first elected National Assembly, where liberals dominated and attempted basic civil-military reform. Their goal was to “transform the army into a body whose first allegiance would be to the constitution which they had undertaken to create.”⁸⁰ However, the inability of liberals and democrats to work together gave the king and army time to recover. ‘March days’ were significant in that they further widened the gulf between military and civilian society. Illustrated by the belief that the retreat from Berlin was viewed as a defeat for officer corps; it increased

⁷⁶ Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 48

⁷⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 93

⁷⁸ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 83

⁷⁹ Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 46

⁸⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 83

their attitude of arrogance and contempt when dealing with civilians. The army was no longer viewed as a tool for foreign defense, via their capitulation to Austria and their Crimean War policy, but rather as an instrument of domestic oppression. This belief was reaffirmed over the next ten years; as foreign policy was subservient to the maintenance of the army as a domestic police force.

B. THE ROLE OF FREDRICK WILLIAM IV

The aforementioned crisis served to alienate both the army and the population from their new leader who, had only a short time before, ascended the throne with so much promise. The army's perception of Frederick William IV was one of indecisiveness and lack of support. Although, his statements seemed to fully support no reduction in their role;

no power on earth, he said will ever force me to transform the natural relationship...between prince and people into a conventional constitutional one,"⁸¹ [and his beliefs;] "one of the few remaining rulers who sincerely believed in the divine right of kings."⁸²

Furthermore, his indecisiveness and lack of military bearing, combined with his 'February patent of 1847,' contributed to a common belief by the army that he lacked the virtues of his forbearers. While political reformers believed;

that the King was a convinced absolutist at heart and that political and social progress would not be achieved with his help. Once the king was recognized for what he was [his position], there came throughout the country, a definite hardening of opposition to the crown and weapons [army] with which it maintained its absolute authority.⁸³

This inactivity contributed to the growing unpopularity of the king by the middle and lower classes, who expected him to

check the growing arrogance of army and officer corps,"⁸⁴ which contributed greatly to the "dangerous antipathy which existed between the army and civil society."⁸⁵

⁸¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 88

⁸² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 86

⁸³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 89

⁸⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 89

Several attempts by the Assembly to curtail the military's influence further served to alienate the army, who believed the king's response was not sufficient from their point of view. The Assembly's attempt to write a, "provision in constitutional draft for a formal oath of allegiance to the constitution to be taken by all officers"⁸⁶ along with, efforts to purge all reactionary officers and, the resignation of those who disagreed with this action further threatened the army's vaulted position. Additionally, the creation of a civilian defense force [*Burgewehr*] was a "blow to the position of the army in the state."⁸⁷ This was followed by the king's statement that once a constitution was drafted, the army would have to swear an oath to it. In turn, the army felt they owed allegiance only to the king and were insulted by this statement. Albrecht von Roon responded to this course of action in a letter to his wife where he stated:

the army is now our fatherland, for there alone have the unclean and violent elements who put everything into turmoil failed to penetrate.⁸⁸

Officers believed that the king had abandoned the army by his concessions to the revolution, and despair soon fell over the army. This was articulated by General von Thile, when he reminded the king that the "army was the only pillar upon which he could still securely lean."⁸⁹ These events, along with attempts by the War Minister via the 'Frankfurt circular' to unify the armies of Prussia and Central Germany under *Reichsverweser* supreme command, were the basis for the beginning of a conspiracy of a possible military coup to restore the pre-March system.

The concerns of the army and the radicalization of the Assembly's proposals seemed to persuade the king to back the military. This was demonstrated when further legislative attempts to have the ministers exert their influence over the military failed as they requested the king no longer directly communicate with commanders, but use the War Ministry, in effect bypassing civilian authority. Instead, the king reversed positions and backed the army over the legislature, by stating:

⁸⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 89

⁸⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 89

⁸⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 106

⁸⁸ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 107

⁸⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 107

that the extension of these principles to the army is justified by no constitution...the principle of complete royal authority in military affairs must be maintained in Prussia [this] cannot be conceived of without the absolute unity of the king with his army, because any infringement of that absolute unity would be the death sentence of Prussia at home and abroad.⁹⁰

These events, combined with the inability of the Assembly to decide on a course of action in regards to the army's role and, disputes between members of the Assembly and representatives of the left prevented any cohesive decisions. The former wanted military oath of allegiance to the constitution of the state and complete reorganization of the army, while the left,

took the position that the time had come to abolish the regular army, which had been the source of so many of the countries ills, and to replace it by a genuine *Volkswehr*...which would be the surest the only guarantee of civil freedom.⁹¹

The riots in Berlin began “the significant turning point in the history of the Prussian revolution of 1848,”⁹² and the restoration of imperial authority in Vienna; thus marking the turning of the tide of revolutionary fortunes in Germany.⁹³ When General von Wrangle's forces finally entered Berlin, they were hailed by the middle class who, “long weary of the insecurity and discomforts of a people's revolution;”⁹⁴ opted for the security and stability provided by the army.

Thus, the political field began to shift from left to right as the middle class appetite for revolution was replaced by the desire for the security of pre-March period. The army was encouraged by this shift in public opinion and believed it validated their position and authority.

The shift in public temper was encouraging to the army, and the first signs of a recovery from disillusionment and moral collapse of March became evident.⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 109

⁹¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 111

⁹² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 112

⁹³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 119

⁹⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 120

⁹⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 112

The military went on the propaganda offensive by publishing the journal *Deutsche-Wehrzeitung*, for the purpose of fighting the ‘demon of revolution.’ In December, after nine months of turmoil and bickering, the National Assembly was dissolved by royal decree. One result of these actions was the repeal of ‘universal suffrage’ and its

replacement by a system which divided electors according to the amount of taxes they paid and made certain that the preponderance of seats in the chamber would be filled by representative of the wealthier classes.⁹⁶

1. Analysis

Emerging European and German liberalism and nationalism threatened the absolutist divine order; citizens were beginning to believe that they no longer needed to swear allegiance to the crown and aristocracy, but to the concept of nation, culture and ethnic heritage. These revolutionary beliefs prompted the army to adapt a ‘fortress mentality’ which resulted in the development of a ‘state within a state.’ Ironically, the army was saved by the middle class, who after a taste of revolution, feared that the instability and chaos would jeopardize their role and privilege in the state. The army correctly foresaw the growing importance of nationalism and successfully co-opted it, helping to solidify the transfer of this political ideology from the left to the right during the next 50 years.

By the late 1850s it was obvious that the drive towards closer union among the Germans could never be reversed: the cultural, linguistic and military impulses were now powerfully reinforced by the needs of industry and trade, which turned out to be the critical factor.⁹⁷

As a result of 1848; Prussia was transformed from an absolute to a constitutional state. The constitution reaffirmed the principle of divine right monarchy, and the army once again escaped civilian control, (although the army was now in a position of having its budget approved by the lower house of parliament).

Under the constitution, the Prusso-German army was an army of universal conscription. Yet, it was [still] led by an officer corps which regarded itself not only as a professional but also as a social and political elite. The officer corps was an integral part of the traditional social and political

⁹⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 122

⁹⁷ Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck*, 141

leadership caste of the Prusso-German state. It constituted a recognized group within the traditional, pre industrial ruling elite and shared its legitimating values.⁹⁸

The “army [was] left outside the constitution, subject only to the king’s control and serving to protect his authority against legislative encroachment.”⁹⁹

Military establishment was not forced to submit to any effective measure of civilian control.”¹⁰⁰ “The critical question of the role of army in the state had been passed over in silence in the constitution of promulgated 5 December 1848, although the king had once more intimated publicly that the army would take an oath to the constitution.¹⁰¹

The king was the recipient of a flood of petitions from retired and active officers, *Offiziersvereine* and patriotic societies urging him to protect the army. Article 108 of revised constitution of 1850 stated flatly that an oath by the army to the constitution will not take place; while articles 44-47 reaffirmed the king’s powers of command and appointment in the army.¹⁰²

For his part, the king sensed that the constitutional struggle of 1848 was not a victory for the crown but an uneasy compromise.

in the last analysis, the new constitution was an attempt to base a political system upon a marriage between an imperfect constitutionalism and an ill-disguised absolutism. The king was intelligent enough to doubt the workability of such, and experiment, even while he assented to it.¹⁰³

The king felt that the Minister of War had responsibility for administrative actions, while he, in his capacity as supreme commander of the army, reserved for himself all military decisions.

Thus, in the post-revolutionary period, the Minister of War became a living embodiment of fateful dualism, which characterized the new governmental system and his required appearance before parliament ... provoked criticism of the army and political ideals for which it stood.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 19

⁹⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 123

¹⁰⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 121

¹⁰¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 122

¹⁰² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 123

¹⁰³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 124

¹⁰⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 125

C. IMPACT OF ROMANTICISM AND PHILOSOPHICAL IDEALISM

The notion that the “impact of romanticism and philosophical idealism had a deeper impact in Germany” than on other European countries is widely held.

“Romanticism discouraged rationalism and analysis in favor of emotion and idealism.”¹⁰⁵ The convergence of these ideas with emerging nationalistic awareness, were the genesis of a new cultural thought, the ‘*Völkisch* culture,’ defined as ‘ethnic-nationalist culture.’

This new, intriguing culture interpretation was ‘mystical in tone,’ preaching unique values and truths for German people, which if properly developed, would raise Germany to eminence among the nations.¹⁰⁶

These traits were the reasons for the attractiveness to the German people they provided a sense of destiny for.

For Germans to be truly free and capable of superior achievement, life and thought had to be thoroughly grounded in the *Volk* and purged of extraneous and corrupting influences, [e.g. ‘materialism, industrialization, urbanization] and the decadence associated with these influences.¹⁰⁷

This concept of decadence in the 19th century was voiced by Parisian literary elite in the last phase of classic romanticism during 1830-40s, and generalized in the second half of the century over mass urbanization and growth in crime.¹⁰⁸

Fascist strongly reflected the preoccupation with decadence in society and culture that had been growing since the mid 19th century. They believed that decadence could only be overcome through a revolutionary new culture led by the new elites, who would replace the old elites of liberalism and conservatism and the left.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 52

¹⁰⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 52

¹⁰⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 52

¹⁰⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 29

¹⁰⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 9

Germany could be truly liberated and capable of realizing its greater mission only by overcoming these pernicious effects and returning as much as possible to the soil.¹¹⁰

Such historians as Heinrich von Treitschke and Heinrich von Sybel, began to elaborate on *Völkisch* theories and ideology. These ideas were compiled during the last part of the 19th century by philosophers, Paul de Lagarde and Julius Langbehn. Consumption of these ideas by ‘middle class society’ insured the transference of a vague idea into a broad acceptance by the masses towards the concepts of this ideology. Therefore, *Völkisch* culture became the cultural foundation of German nationalism, supported increasingly by the middle class and segments of the intelligentsia who viewed the German state through an increasing skewed vantage point.¹¹¹

[The] nation as a higher historical force--the notion of superior political sovereignty--derived from the general will of the people and idea of inherent racial differences in human culture.¹¹²

Nationalism and later fascism increasingly drew from the works of Henrich Luden’s ‘peoples empire’ and Johann Gottlob Fichte earlier observations that, “Germans were the most deserving of nations, and their culture was superior to all others”¹¹³

[This] superiority of humanistic German culture, which was to culminate in the creation of a national state, was one of the grandiose historical ideologies of the day; another was the ‘myth of the German people’ suffused with a romantic sacred radiance.¹¹⁴

D. RACISM AND RELIGION

The combination, evolution, and interpretation of such new theories as; Darwinism, Social Darwinism, scientism, and eugenics was the ‘slippery slope’ that equated to; violence equals murder...equals genocide in the 20th century.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 52

¹¹¹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 53

¹¹² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 203

¹¹³ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 167

¹¹⁴ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 166

¹¹⁵ Donald Abenheim, *NS4023, Class Discussion*

Modern racial concepts originated amid the 18th century enlightenment, as geographers and anthropologists first make systematic attempts to categorize the diverse inhabitants of the earth.¹¹⁶

Although the “first racial concepts were relatively benign,”¹¹⁷ they began to evolve in combination with other doctrines during the 19th century as the search for unity in nature was attracting more followers in the quest to associate, “the ideal and the physical, the cultural and the material, the spiritual and the biological and the natural and the social.”¹¹⁸

In the second half of the nineteenth century, conservatism began to make common cause with nationalistic, populist, and ultimately with anti-Semitic movements.¹¹⁹

This resulted in the

engineering of a variety of new theories involving pseudoscientific extrapolations from anthropology and zoology. This new scientism encouraged concepts of race, elitism, hierarchy, and glorification of ‘war and violence’ throughout Europe.¹²⁰

Criminologist such as Lombroso

developed anthropological and virtual racial definitions of criminal type, said to be rapidly increasing in numbers. The growth of racial doctrines produced fears of racial decay amid what were perceived as the expanding proportions of the *déclassé* and degraded sectors of society.¹²¹

It is during this era that the

term ‘anti-Semitism’ was coined by anti-Jewish writer Wilhelm Marr in the 1860s. French aristocrat, Comte George Vacher de Lapouge, who extensively disseminated racial doctrines in France during the late 19th century, specifically demonized Jews, dangerous because of their internal roles within European society.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 30

¹¹⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 30

¹¹⁸ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 30

¹¹⁹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 154

¹²⁰ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 30

¹²¹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 30

¹²² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 31

The new theories of ‘scientific racism’ and ‘mystical racism’ created

sharp distinctions and categories among the various peoples of Europe, to establish the absolute superiority of Aryan, Nordic, or Germanic Europeans as distinct from Slavs Latin’s, or Balkan people.¹²³

[The] Greatest advocate of mystical racism in Germany was Houston Stewart Chamberlain; he codified the new germanistic doctrines of mystical racism as earlier developed by Wagner and others. He affirmed the existence of a special ‘race soul’ that created a more imaginative and profound spirit in Aryans and produced a ‘German religion,’ vaguely related to Christianity. The ultimate anti-Aryan and most bitter racial foe was the Jew. Chamberlain combined social Darwinism with racism and thus emphasized an endless racial struggle on behalf of purity of Aryanism and against Jews and lesser peoples, virtually crating a scenario for race war.¹²⁴

Adolf Hitler later adopted and espoused these extreme racist and social Darwinist ideas. He re-elaborated these ideas he had ingested in earlier years into his book *Mein Kampf*. His two main ideas being that of race and space, all history was a history of racial struggle.¹²⁵

[Hitler’s ideas] were partly rooted in modern scientism of German biological and zoological ideas of late 19th century and a keen interest in the occult, directed not toward superstitions but new modern and racial myths of the supernatural.¹²⁶

Social Darwinism was the beginning of scientific racism, and when combined with religious beliefs, concepts of mysticism and racial intolerance, resulted in an emerging dangerous and destructive ideology.

During the 19th century, the belief of a mystical, intra-European Nordic heritage combined with religion and racism lead to the development of new ideas and religious theories. The German philosophy of revolution and nationalism often mildly anti-Jewish became increasingly hostile with the embracing of these ‘mystical concepts of Nordic racism’ in the late 19th century.¹²⁷ Stanley Payne noted that,

¹²³ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 31

¹²⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 31

¹²⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 157

¹²⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 202

¹²⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 51

this combining of religion with the mystical concepts and doctrines of the occult encouraged and justified the incorporation of anti-Semitic ideas into religion and national culture. These beliefs tended to be linked increasingly to racist groups.¹²⁸

He also wrote that, “nonrationalist and/or pseudoscientific concepts merged into the remarkable rise of modern occult interest.”¹²⁹ The latter had grown rapidly from mid-century, and by 1900, counted untold millions of devotees in different cults and forms. A significant form of occultism was put forth at the turn of the century by Guido von List and Jörg Lanz von Liebenfels who

developed an ‘occult doctrine of ‘Ariosophy’ whose fundamental concepts involved a secret Aryan racial wisdom that guaranteed strength, purity, and racial superiority in ancient times but had been lost or contaminated.¹³⁰

This doctrine was instrumental in the partial foundation of Nazi ideology involving Ariosophic occultism. It facilitated fascism’s fundamental goal of attempting the creation of a new ‘civic religion.’ This system encompassed the myths of the ‘structure of the state,’ regulating conventional religion to a “secondary status or none at all.”¹³¹ Many shared the emerging perception of this new religion, which believed that conventional churches are based on human ignorance and were an attempt to keep people ignorant and under control.¹³²

National Socialist and Christian conceptions are incompatible. The Christian churches build upon men’s ignorance; by contrast, National Socialism rests upon scientific foundations.¹³³

The purpose of the Nazi Sacralization of ideology was not merely to achieve abstract belief, but rather to harness faith as a motivating engine for concrete action.¹³⁴

¹²⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 32

¹²⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 59

¹³⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 59

¹³¹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 9

¹³² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 20

¹³³ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 132; Quoting H.R. Trevor-Roper, ‘Martin Bormann,’ *Der Monat*, No. 68, May 1954

¹³⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER’S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 119

These emerging beliefs, combining various theories on racism, mysticism, and occultism were the foundation for the ‘Ostara Society,’ which preached “extreme Nordic racism, anti Semitism, and cultural revolution.”¹³⁵ Hitler would become an avid reader of their literature, and appears to have adopted their characteristics, of “occult symbols, rituals, and hidden lore” ¹³⁶ into Nazi ideology and symbolism. These pan-German, Aryan racial and intensely anti-Jewish attitudes formed the core of Hitler’s ‘*Weltanschauung*.’ These concepts helped to initiate the revival of a mythical, racial, and nationalistic past. They served to revise history and create a vision of this idealized legacy. This radical social transformation was required to regain the heroic spirit of the past, destroyed by racial mixing (*völkergemisch*) and the nations restoration to former greatness. These actions would ensure the creation of a unified culture within a new nation, eliminating deviant ideology and undesirable genetic traits.

The idea of the nation had a quasi-religious undertone, since a nation has no visible physical presence, it has to be believed in, nationalism is the secular faith of the industrial age. The new state was not sanctioned by god, but by the nation.¹³⁷

These new beliefs would become the foundation for the ‘political correct’ education of German youth under the Nazis. They utilized the infrastructure of many prevalent organizations and societies within the German culture to indoctrinate the future generations of Germany with their drastically altered racial and religious views.

The people must be increasingly wrested from the churches and their instruments, the priest. Never again must the churches be allowed any influence over the leadership of the people. This must be broken totally and forever. Only then will the existence of nation and Reich be assured.¹³⁸

Belief in Hitler, in an increasingly religious, metaphysical sense of the term, was a central element in Nazi ideology.¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 59

¹³⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 159

¹³⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 158

¹³⁸ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 133; Quoting H.R. Trevor-Roper, ‘Martin Bormann,’ *Der Monat*, No. 68, May 1954

¹³⁹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER’S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 118

Fascist's reinforced the mystical, by using 'quasi-religious rituals, spectacular rallies, and mass media to generate mass support. The creation of holidays and songs to celebrate martyrs, (i.e. Horst Wessel) significant events in the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP) history, large-scale sporting events, and exhibitions were used to signify strength and accomplishment. Life under fascism was meant to be historical, life-given, and beautiful,' not empty and dull as with democracy. These quasi-religious and racist theories coalesced into the ideology of Hitler's vision of fascism

All of Hitler's political and social ideas had their origin in variants of the 18th century enlightenment; the revolt against traditional culture in the name of revolutionary secularism, belief in a secular natural law, and a naturalistic Deist concept of god. The rejection of traditional Christian concept of the unity of mankind in favor of racial division, and emphasis on combination of biological inequality and social equality, distinction between productive and unproductive, emphasis on people and the national group, Rousseauian general will of the people, optimistic belief in progress and a higher humanity and the cult of will—all of these Hitlerian beliefs were fundamental postulates in modern philosophy and culture.¹⁴⁰

E. 1860-1865 BISMARCK'S STATE CRAFT

It was a blow of fate that in this moment of crisis the one man who was ready and able to defy parliament without formally abolishing the Constitution should have been waiting and ready in the wings. The alternatives were abdication in favor of a liberally inclined crown prince, or military dictatorship at the hands of General Manteuffel.¹⁴¹

This period saw the reemergence of the Prussian constitutional conflict between Parliament and Sovereign which would eventually become to be labeled as "the central event in domestic German history in the last 100 years."¹⁴² The highlights of this period are; the tenacious attempt by Prussian liberalism to win significant influence over the military establishment, the renewed interest by liberals in foreign politics at the expense of domestic reforms, Otto von Bismarck's strategy in dealing with the nationalistic objectives of both the military and parliament, and the collapse of a 'united front' by the liberals.

¹⁴⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 483

¹⁴¹ Edward Crankshaw, *Bismarck*, 188

¹⁴² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 137

These attempts failed for two reasons: partially because of Bismarck's appointment to the position of President Minister and his advocacy of the 'royal cause,' and the liberals' continued inability to coordinate their goals; along with their desire for 'national greatness' at the expense of domestic reforms.¹⁴³ However, the military was again unable to accomplish their goal of defeating the liberals by terminating the constitution and returning Prussia to an absolute system. The pivotal role in denying both the army and the liberals their overall objectives was the skillful diplomacy of Bismarck, who maneuvered the country through his position of President Minister in the direction he felt best suited Prussia and Germany's national interest.

During this period, the army was greatly influenced by two individuals: Roon, a realist who saw the expansion of Germany's European interest through military power, and Edwin von Manteuffel, an unwavering absolutist who felt the revolution of 1848 should have been crushed by force. Thus, the military's hard-line view during this period, both in domestic and foreign affairs, was a result of their perceived failure to completely crush the revolution in 1848. Roon's preference of a well-trained, professional army and disregard for the *Landwehr* brought him into conflict with the new Minister of War, Eduard von Bonin. Roon proposed the elimination of the *Landwehr* as a 'separate arm' of the military and advocated its absorption into the line force where it would be commanded by professional officers. He strongly believed the *Landwehr* "represented the main drag upon the efficiency of the Prussian army,"¹⁴⁴ and, was both 'politically and military false' because it no longer impressed foreign adversaries and, lacked proper discipline. Bonin, along with the liberals, disagreed with Roon's views for two different reasons: first, Bonin viewed an attempt to reduce power of *Landwehr* as detrimental due to its popularity; and furthermore, he believed if Roon's memorandum was implemented,

it would separate the army from the country and create a situation in which Prussia would lose the essential condition of her existence, namely, the confidence of the people in the army.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 137

¹⁴⁴ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 140

¹⁴⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 141

Secondly, the liberals were believers in the *Landwehr's* military ability, and by attempting to reduce its power; the government/army was trying to destroy the foundation/framework of the people's liberty. These views collided with Roon's, and coupled with Bonin's procrastination and inability to influence the crown, along with the manpower requirements in light of the Italian war, played into the hands of his enemies on the court who sought his removal, chief among them was Manteuffel (who opposed Bonin due to his interpretations of the role of his office). Thus, his enemies were able to taint his reputation and cast doubts on his abilities in the eyes of the king. This political maneuvering by the army resulted in the resignation of Bonin and his replacement by Roon. Roon's accession to the Minister of War office reassured the army that the powers of the office would not be used to weaken royal power and place restrictions on the army, as Roon's "loyalty to the sovereign superseded all others."¹⁴⁶ Thus, with the king's dedication ceremony at the tomb of Frederick the Great, "the future organization of the army and the fate of the *Landwehr* had, in effect, been decided by a royal fait accompli."¹⁴⁷

In 1862, Bismarck became Minister President and began a delicate balancing act between three different players, (the military, the crown, and the parliament), to find "an arrangement which might remove the current stalemate,"¹⁴⁸ over military budget and, end strength debate in parliament. Bismarck had a clear vision of where he wanted to lead Germany and deftly maneuvered these competing interests to accomplish what he felt, in the end, was best for Prussia; the unification of Germany. One of his significant goals was to reach some sort of reconciliation with parliamentary opposition,

an understanding with the majority of the deputies, which will not at the same time, prejudice the future authority and governmental powers of the crown or endanger the proficiency of the army.¹⁴⁹

Bismarck's ability to negotiate with the Chamber was hampered by several situations: liberal suspicions and the king's attitude and stubbornness (encouraged by

¹⁴⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 144

¹⁴⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 152

¹⁴⁸ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 162

¹⁴⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 161

military advisors who were also suspicious of Bismarck's motives), which prevented him from freely negotiating with the deputies.

At this time, Parliament was consistently trying to limit the size of the army, as well as cut their budget. Bismarck believed this was because of the memory of 1848 and their lingering belief that the military's role was for the oppression of domestic liberty and rights.

fixed liberal belief that the government had no intention of using the augmented forces for any but domestic purposes.¹⁵⁰

Bismarck realized a foreign war would demonstrate the military's willingness to use troops abroad; and not solely for domestic repression. However, in order to accomplish this, he needed funding to facilitate the build-up of military force. Bismarck and Roon thus conceived the 'Army Service bill,' which satisfied numerous interest groups in regards to its position on service, taxes, and budget control. This plan was sabotaged by Manteuffel's interference and, in part, because of the king's position that he alone had decision power on size, organization and command, and that the chamber had only a budgetary right when it came to military affairs.¹⁵¹ Thus, because of military interference, Bismarck was forced to be "more of a royalist than the king"¹⁵² and informed the chamber that if they

persisted in its refusal to vote funds... we will take the money where we find it...he proceeded to demonstrate that this could be done without difficulty.¹⁵³

In January of 1864, when the opportunity for foreign war presented itself in the Schleswig-Holstein crises with Denmark, Bismarck capitalized on this confrontation to skillfully quiet parliamentary and liberal opposition. Ironically, the increasing liberal call for military intervention in the Danish crises provided Bismarck the opportunity to validate his proposed military expenditures, unite the people, and quiet domestic turmoil ('wag the dog' scenario).

¹⁵⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 167

¹⁵¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 163

¹⁵² Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 163

¹⁵³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 164

The Prussian liberals who wanted to march to the aid of their ‘northern brothers’ were stricken by the awful thought that in this noblest of causes they were demanding military actions from the very man to who they were so furiously denying the means of military actions.¹⁵⁴

1. Analysis

“In the constitutional conflict of the 1860’s, the army had been saved from a determined effort on the part of the middle-class liberals to subject it to civilian control.”¹⁵⁵ Once again, victory in foreign war and the ensuing patriotism had saved the army from any democratic civil-military reforms. Bismarck’s belief in the unifying effects of a successful foreign victory proved true.

Bismarck had long held that, if they were given a foreign success sufficiently striking to inflate their self-esteem, the Prussian people would forget their internal grievances; and this proved true.¹⁵⁶

Bismarck, over the next two years was able through military victory and deft political maneuvering, to swing the liberals and middle class to his position, and was eventually able to persuade the Chamber to pass a budget law referred to as ‘the Claudine yoke of Prussian liberalism.’ The ability of Bismarck to convert so many former opponents through the use of patriotism was commented on by Wilhelm Liebknecht, who stated:

the oppressors of yesterday are the saviors of today; right has become wrong and wrong right. Blood appears, indeed, to be a special elixir, for the angel of darkness has become the angel of light before whom the people lie in the dust and adore. The stigma of violation of the constitution has been washed from his brow, and in its place the halo of glory rings his laurelled head.¹⁵⁷

Bismarck had become the champion of universal suffrage, and this principle becomes the basis of the constitutional arrangements of 1867 and 1871.¹⁵⁸

Bismarck’s efforts would carry over and bear fruit in the three wars of German unification. By 1871,

¹⁵⁴ Edward Crankshaw, Bismarck, 166

¹⁵⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 164

¹⁵⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 170

¹⁵⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 177

¹⁵⁸ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 178

the German empire was well on the way to becoming the leading industrial power in Europe and was scarcely matched anywhere in the modernity of its economic and scientific achievement.¹⁵⁹

The political and military impotence was about to change as the successful unification and establishment of economic and industrial might resulted in, “German politics since 1890s meant world politics.”¹⁶⁰ The success of industrialization and unification under Bismarck created another fundamental problem that would continue to cause military and government leaders problems until the mid-twentieth century.

The fact that Germany’s industrial revolution coincided with the founding of the state under the leadership of a still feudal Prussia left the new nation with a problem fundamental to its existence: that of integration.¹⁶¹

The problem of integration thus became an essential, if not decisive, structural feature of the Prusso-German nation state.¹⁶²

These evolving socio-political movements and ideas were foreign to the army, and presented integration problems with numerous evolving segments of society. However,

The most effective instrument of the national integration of Germany as a ‘retarded nation state’ (Helmut Plessner) was certainly the army [taking the place of the middle class, in the late 19th century; however, after World War I, the middle class reemerged]. The army regarded itself as the sole guardian of the state and the monarch, not just against foreign aggressors, but also against the enemy within, the Social Democrats, Catholics and Liberals.¹⁶³

Hitler would later solve this problem by using fascism to integrate Germany and ‘silence’ the enemy within.

F. FIN DE SIÈCLE: INTELLECTUAL CRISES OF 1890S

This generation of the late 19th century saw the challenge to longstanding ideas concerning culture, spiritual, and racial norms, along with the impact of the ‘second

¹⁵⁹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 173

¹⁶⁰ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 249

¹⁶¹ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 18

¹⁶² Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 19

¹⁶³ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 246

industrial revolution' and rapid expansion of new and improved means of travel and communication.¹⁶⁴ These advancements along with an increase in the urbanization of politics and media led to a new 'visual age.' French writer Charles Peguy noted in 1900 that "more had changed in thirty years than in the past two thousand."¹⁶⁵

The roots of fascism lay in the innovations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and particularly in the new doctrines and concepts produced by the cultural changes of the 1890s and the years that immediately followed.¹⁶⁶

This change had also encompassed thought, whereas ideas of "liberalism in politics, materialism and science in culture,"¹⁶⁷ were being rejected by segments of the late 19th century generation. New concepts of "subjectivism, emotionalism, nonrationalism, and vitalism"¹⁶⁸ were being embraced in an attempt to reverse the values of an earlier generation. This period is recalled as the "intellectual crisis of the 1890s."¹⁶⁹ Such men as Friedrich Nietzsche rejected 19th century 'materialism and rationalism,' equating "modern democracy and collectivism with herd psychology."¹⁷⁰ Instead, his concepts of an elite race, "will to power, the master race, the superman, the blonde beast and triumph of the strong nations over the weak"¹⁷¹ fueled irrational and elitist theories.

The Romantic ideal was of man unified in thought and action or will, as contrasted with the Enlightenment abstract vision of the pure intellectual or disinterested Scientist. Friedrich Nietzsche's conceptions of human nature exhibiting a will to power and of the superman, who expresses it to the highest degree, especially influenced Hitler's idea of the *Urbemensch*.¹⁷²

This period is known as the 'fin de siècle,' and was a time of extraordinary changes in industry, technology, cultural and thought, which gave rise to new ideas and

¹⁶⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁶⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁶⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 23

¹⁶⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁶⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁶⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁷⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁷¹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 261

¹⁷² Myra Moss, *On The Origin and Evolution of European Fascism*, 2

theories that challenged or repudiated the status quo of earlier generations.¹⁷³ Politics were no different as they took on a new meaning and urgency to eradicate social decay associated with the theory of Social Darwinism.

Politics, meaning war, and war was needed to incinerate the evils of the new age, which ranged from individualism to socialism, so that a nation might arise rejuvenated from the ashes.¹⁷⁴

This was a very popular view in newspapers and periodicals between 1880-1914, and not just the ranting of a ‘handful of extremists.’ In fact, these views “provided the nucleus of Social Darwinism that sustained popular nationalism”¹⁷⁵ during this volatile period.

Hitler was influenced above all, by the theories of the nineteenth-century social Darwinist school--whose conception of man as biological material was bound up with impulses towards a planned society. He was convinced that the race was disintegrating, deteriorating through faulty breeding as a result of a liberally tinged promiscuity that was vitiating the nation’s blood.¹⁷⁶

The military was not immune to social changes and found itself increasingly being influenced by a mixture of the rising tide of nationalism coupled with Social Darwinism. General Friedrich von Bernhardi would publish ‘Germany and the next War’ in 1912 which strongly

exhorted politicians to look on war as a ‘moral necessity,’ which would purge the nation and lead it on to its higher destiny.¹⁷⁷

France contributed greatly to new ideas and rationales debated during this period. Georges Sorel advocated the restructuring of socialism to overcome the current ‘decadence’ of Marxism. This, in his opinion, required action in three dimensions:

Economic--acceptance and affirmation of free market; cultural--motivating power of idealism and myth, and; political--rejection of parliamentary trap of liberal democracy.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷³ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 24

¹⁷⁴ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 261

¹⁷⁵ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 261

¹⁷⁶ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 99

¹⁷⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 262

Sorel also “emphasized the moral character of violence...important to generate a sense of seriousness, commitment, purpose, solidarity, and common bonding.”¹⁷⁹

He additionally stated that

violence was a creative aspect of group conflict that....was good in itself, creating something unavailable through any other experience.¹⁸⁰

Sorel advocated the rejection of materialism and rationalism, in order to establish “heroic pessimism that built heroism, sacrifice and asceticism.”¹⁸¹ His doctrines on non-rational approaches to social organization (myths, symbolism, and emotive appeals) found disciples throughout Europe. Gustave Le Bon viewed crowds as “irrational in behavior and...mass hysteria,”¹⁸² concluding the need for strong leadership in society. Max Weber believed ‘charismatic leadership’ was the necessary alternative to “stultification of government by bureaucratic mediocrity.”¹⁸³ These beliefs were the first “clear theoretical statement of a doctrine fundamental to fascist theory.”¹⁸⁴

Emerging in Germany and Austria at this time were, increased interest in “vitalism and holism in biology and psychiatry,”¹⁸⁵ leading to social concepts of “wholeness and oneness.”¹⁸⁶ In Italy, a revolt against positivism and a rejection of rationalism and parliamentary systems was unfolding. Theorist Pareto denounced “democracy and socialism as myths” and believed politics “rested on emotion, thus requiring an enlightened system of stronger authority.”¹⁸⁷ Music, literature, and the arts also began to reject the realism of 19th century culture, and turned towards more Neoromantic ideas. Works by German composer Richard Wagner began creating a

¹⁷⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 28

¹⁷⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 26

¹⁸⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 26

¹⁸¹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 26

¹⁸² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 27

¹⁸³ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 27

¹⁸⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 29

¹⁸⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 26

¹⁸⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 26

¹⁸⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 27

“mystic world of Germanic past that exalted instinctive forces and tragic heroism.”¹⁸⁸ Art began to represent internal and emotive forces through the rejection of realism and the embrace of expressionism and abstraction. These views and beliefs were effectively used to add credibility to the militaristic views and necessity for political violence exposed and exploited by National Socialism after World War I. The Nazis would place an emphasis on masculinity in art and culture; they “mobilized people through elaborate public ceremonies and visual arts, and mass culture.”¹⁸⁹

Fascist ideology prized the visual arts, by “creating romanticized versions of realism and neoclassical motifs in architecture, their art emphasized nudes as revealing of race.¹⁹⁰ Central to Nazi ideology was the worship of beauty, by creating ‘normative aesthetics,’ guidelines for what was ‘correct’ in the adherence to a cult of artistic beauty was translated to youth, the standard-bearers for future generations. This beauty was based upon the 19th century concept of aestheticism in society and the cult of youth, a view of the ‘visual age’ to be dominated by a ‘visual culture.’ The fruition of this cult of youth was the emphasis on masculinity and physical superiority. Men and youth were the predominate force in the political movement, ‘radical misogyny’ abhorred anything androgynous and emphasized masculinity in art.¹⁹¹ This

cult of manliness and a more self conscious emphasis on masculine expression was a reaction to sedentary egalitarian tendencies of modern society.¹⁹²

Nazi propaganda was therefore obsessed with the physic of the male and female body to further racial stereotypes, just as German architecture reflected the notion that “we are the heirs of cultural greatness.”¹⁹³

The European continent over the past century had experienced tumultuous growing pains; from early revolutions to the consolidation of Nation-States and the emergence of diverse ideologies. These contributing factors coalesced near the end of the

¹⁸⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 27

¹⁸⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 197

¹⁹⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 197

¹⁹¹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 13

¹⁹² Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 33

¹⁹³ Donald Abenheim, *NS 4023, Class Discussion*.

century with rising Imperialism and the Second Industrial Revolution to set the stage for the militaristic confrontation of ‘machine warfare’ in what would prove to be the bloodiest period of world history, known as the ‘century of war.’

The nationalist ideology had thus conquered Central and Eastern Europe and, from the early twentieth century onward, embarked on its triumphant march toward self-realization.¹⁹⁴

The most powerful political driving force in nineteenth-and twentieth-century Central and Eastern Europe was a highly emotional nationalism that mobilized tens of millions to act on its “eternal” principle.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 61

¹⁹⁵ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 50

IV. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

A. POLITICAL CHANGE IN IMPERIAL GERMANY: WILHELM II

The final decades of the nineteenth century, along with the first decade of the twentieth century, witnessed the change of nationalism in Germany from a progressive ideology--associated with liberty and democracy--to a conservative brand of patriotism with an elitist doctrine, which regarded other nationalities with contempt and inferiority. With the ascension to the throne of Wilhelm II in 1888 and the subsequent removal of Bismarck in 1890, the astute statecraft--which had guided Germany's foreign policy under the tutelage of Bismarck--was swept aside in favor of a more aggressive, confrontational approach. Wilhelm II's approach to social issues garnered him increased popularity and political prestige among the masses. However, it was his diplomatic incompetency and meddling that further isolated Germany and destroyed the careful balance of power so skillfully crafted under Bismarck; e.g. failure to diplomatically isolate France, lapsing of the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, and most significantly, embarking on colonial expansion to attain 'a place in the sun,' highlighted by a naval arms race with Great Britain (Tirpitz Plan). The emperor's blatant militarism fueled a right-wing shift in political and military thinking, contributing significantly to the previous centuries emerging idealism and grandiose aspirations of conquest. The military was not unaffected by these emerging trends, and they continued to fester after the turn of the century.

The intellectual climate of 1914, however, differed significantly from that of 1880. Subtle forces had drastically altered the value structure of the German nation. As a result, military popularity became a threat rather than an aid to professionalism. A limited and conservative ideology had given way to one which was nationalistic and aggressive. Materialism, bellicosity, the glorification of violence and war, worship of naked *Macht* superseded the more reasonable, idealistic, and humane elements in the German spirit. Mommsen, Droysen, Sybel, Treitschke, Nietzsche supplanted Goethe, Schiller, Kant and Clausewitz. War and power

became ends in themselves and the man of power consequently was viewed not as the servant of the state but rather as the embodiment of the State.¹⁹⁶

The dawn of a new century did nothing to dampen the growing nationalistic expectations and ambitions of European governments and the populations they ruled. Vast resources had been allocated to a military build up on the continent with two age-old enemies--Germany and France--overseeing an armaments race for nearly forty years, which resulted in the largest standing armies in history. With these dedicated resources and the fevered pitch of rampant nationalism, governments and their military's succumbed to the growing call to flex their respective military muscle. However, not all were swept up in the tide of nationalism and war; the voice of caution was best represented by French revolutionary Jean Jaures, who ominously predicted;

From a European war a revolution may spring up and the ruling classes would do well to think of this. But it may also result, over a long period, in crises of counter-revolution, of furious reaction, of exasperated nationalism, of stifling dictatorships, of monstrous militarism, a long chain of retrograde violence.¹⁹⁷

The more militant had a far different view of the prospects/goals and benefits of war

[In Germany] nearly all the political parties, the business community, a high proportion of the university professoriate, the bulk of the middle class, and significant portions of the working class were desirous of the most ambitious kind of territorial expansion and were sure that the war would make this possible.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 105

¹⁹⁷ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 115

¹⁹⁸ Gordon Craig, *Makers of Modern Strategy, The Political Leader as Strategist*, 482

Others celebrated and hoped for a war as a purge that could not end before the grand national cleansing was completed, the shackles of materialism and corporatism had fallen off, and a new society was forged in the pure spirit of nationalism.¹⁹⁹

B. REVOLUTION 1918-1920

The previous three opportunities for significant constitutional reform in Prussian history had been predicated upon; defeat and then reform (1808-1819), the military's oppression and abuse in response to political unrest (1848), and the constitutional conflict and reform of Bismarck's era (1860-66). Whereas, the military had been saved by potential reforms in the former and middle class fears and foreign victories in the latter, the period of 1918-1920 is unique; for the military was saved not by victory, but defeat and the ensuing chaos and middle class fears associated with the rise of bolshevism.

Defeat is sometimes enough to spark fundamental reform within a military system; this had been the case in Prussia after its loss to Napoleon in 1806. The First World War for all its horrific impact did not create a like effect in Germany. The General Staff developed a set of explanations for the defeat that missed the most important issues. Failed domestic policies; conflict between the army and the home front; and the lack of a strong centralized command.²⁰⁰

The officer corps faced a unique challenge during the closing days of the Great War. The imperial balance in civil-military relations had been shattered and the General Staff had, in effect been running the government. This created two unique problems. First, how to avoid public accountability and responsibility for defeat (*Kriegsschuldfrage*).

The high command was also responsible for the fact that public opinion in Germany was in no way prepared for this blow, because it had been fed for years with the hope of a 'victor's peace'.²⁰¹

Second, if not more important, the desire to maintain its privileged position within the traditional elites. The military led by General Erich von Ludendorff and Field

¹⁹⁹ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 530

²⁰⁰ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 13

²⁰¹ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 5

Marshal Paul von Hindenburg addressed the first issue by creating the myth of the ‘stab in the back,’ (*Dolchstoßlegende*) Ludendorff and the German high command “virtually ordered the majority parties [Social Democrats, Catholic Centre Party and the Liberals] in the Reichstag to assume power before the cease fire.”²⁰² Ludendorff consequently would greatly influence Hitler with his military point of view and provided a scapegoat all in one. Ludendorff reinterpreted Clausewitz’s view of the interaction of war and politics. He believed that

war and politics were the same; war must end either in victory or in annihilation, not peaceful negotiation that permitted the enemy time to recover his strength.²⁰³ [Ludendorff also] saddled a convenient scapegoat with the responsibility for defeat, surrender, and the legend of the ‘stab in the back,’ which was to poison public life in the Weimar republic...democracy and those who supported it [were the scapegoat]²⁰⁴

the government (and particularly the Jews) had failed the fighting men, first by not unifying German society behind the war effort, and then by concluding a treasonous truce when the army was still capable of fighting. The myth fulfilled two functions. First, it kept the General Staffs hands clean from being a scapegoat and also allowed the General Staff to avoid facing up to the consequences of its action. The General Staff was simply not prepared to question its own strategic assumptions.²⁰⁵

On November 9, 1918, the army’s collapse and subsequent repercussions caused the end of the Hohenzollern dynasty, ending 280 years of service by the military. The Reich was transformed into a republic. This event threw the military leadership into a crisis, as not only did they have to deal with the repercussions of defeat, but their special relationship to the monarchy and within state.

the abdication of the emperor was ‘not a mere change of the form of government. It was--at least for the Prussian army--the collapse of the world. The army had been “royal”, i.e., lined indissolubly with the person of the king...this army was inconceivable without the king.’²⁰⁶

²⁰² Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 276

²⁰³ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 273

²⁰⁴ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 277

²⁰⁵ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler’s High Command*, 13

²⁰⁶ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 8

“It was the officers special position within the state--their standing as political elite--that determined not only their self-conception, but their attitude to the state and to society, even after the monarchy’s collapse.²⁰⁷

Thus the officer corps in November 1918 was suddenly deprived of the spiritual and ideological centre on which its whole existence rested.²⁰⁸

War and revolution resulted in a profound questioning of the system of political rule as well as the social system in which the Prusso-German officer corps came into being and evolved. At the same time, the inner unity of the officer corps was disintegrating as warfare [had] become mechanized and industrialized.²⁰⁹

The army was quickly able to weather the storm due to several factors, among them, the overwhelming fear of communism by the middle class.

[The] majority of German people in the years 1918-20, including the leaders of the largest socialist parties, were more afraid of communism than they were of an unreformed and unregenerate military establishment...a few of the army’s leaders had the wisdom to realize this and to exploit it for all that it was worth.²¹⁰

In October of 1918, true military reforms, the type feared by the army in 1848, 1860, and 1883, finally seemed to be placed upon the army. However, social revolution starting with the Kiel mutiny quickly spread throughout Germany, and socialist councils were quickly set up in major cities.

At the beginning of November, the sailors of Kiel and Wilhelmshaven had mutinied, hoisted the red flag and formed sailors councils. The authority of the naval officers had gone. From the ports, the torch of revolution was carried to the western and southern Germany; everywhere workers and soldier’s councils were formed.²¹¹

The result of these events was that on November 9th, Prince Max abdicated power and the republic of Germany was created. This tide of events concerned the army, as socialism was biased against the maintenance of a professional military tradition.

²⁰⁷ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 19

²⁰⁸ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 8

²⁰⁹ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 23

²¹⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 343

²¹¹ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 7

The officer corps believed-or wanted to believe-themselves to be the heirs to medieval chivalry.²¹²

However, the chaos that enveloped the country presented the military with the opportunity to secure its role within the new government and insure the government's dependence upon the military for its role; thus, a mutual beneficial relationship, although unstable at first, was established. The majority Socialist leaders wished quickly to restore order rather than pursue a 'genuinely socialist policy,'

Their principle objective... was to quickly restore internal order as quickly as possible, lest the extremist drive Germany into the arms of bolshevism. The fact that this was so, offered the army an opportunity to assume a commanding position in the counsels of the new regime at the very outset of its existence; and one man at supreme headquarters had the intelligence to realize this [Groener].²¹³

The inauguration of the Weimar Republic saw the role of the military change from complete dominance of the state to essential support for the state.²¹⁴

The emergence of General William Groener to replace Ludendorff as first quartermaster-general was crucial to the survival of the army in its historical role, despite the potential for the monarch's abdication; Groener had two key beliefs;

he believed the unity of Reich must be maintained, [and that] the officer corps must be preserved as the protector of that unity, the guardian of national stability and development, the source of moral-spiritual strength for future generations.²¹⁵

[Groener] sought the alliance with the new government. 'he thought he knew that a reconstruction of Germany was impossible without the help of the officer corps, and when on 9 November he let the monarch go by default, it was precisely because he feared that it would otherwise drag the officer corps with it.'²¹⁶

²¹² Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 14

²¹³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 345

²¹⁴ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 109

²¹⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 347

²¹⁶ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 12

Additionally, upon receipt of the allied peace terms, Groener realized the unacceptability of their demands, and wished to save the army the embarrassment and responsibility of accepting them; thus, the need for a civilian government to accept responsibility (continuation/origin of ‘stab in the back’ theory). Groener expressed these views and his parallel goal of insuring a place within the new government for the army when he wrote;

[the need] with keeping our weapons clean and the general staff unburdened for the future, [the army] needed a civilian government, which would assume the responsibility for accepting them. [Peace terms].²¹⁷

We hoped to transfer through our activity, part of the power in the new state to the army and the officer corps: if we succeed in this, the best and the strongest element of the old Prussian was saved for the new Germany, in spite of revolution²¹⁸

A fateful phone call between Groener and Friedrich Ebert (leader of the Majority Socialist party & new Chancellor of the Reich) sealed the deal of mutual support for each other’s organizations and the role the army would perform based on the army’s perception of the government’s responsibilities. Groener promised the high command would continue its functions to insure order while troops returned from the front, in exchange, for the government’s pledge in securing the army’s supplies and maintaining army discipline.²¹⁹

It was only natural that the high command, to secure its own authority, co-operated ever more closely with the moderate section of the government and its leader, Ebert.²²⁰

The army’s guarantees were conditional; Groener highlighted conditions that the government must meet in exchange for the support of the army,

he stressed the fact that the officer corps looked to the government to combat bolshevism and was putting itself at the government’s disposal primarily for that purpose.²²¹

²¹⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 347

²¹⁸ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 12

²¹⁹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 348

²²⁰ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 15

²²¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 348

This deal, although one of expedience and necessity due to the ongoing revolution would doom the Weimar Republic.

The continued revolution created a situation in which Groener realized the army could no longer contain radical elements of the left and the spartacists. This was highlighted by the Independents charges that Ebert was conspiring with the military and their refusal to admit returning troops to enter Berlin. Ebert succumbed to army threats of withdrawing support for his government, and the situation was resolved upon entering the city; the soldiers deserted and returned to their families. This social turmoil he deduced could not be combated by enlisted members of the regular army as it had since been transformed into a 'people's army,' and that their loyalty was in question. These fears were magnified by the large number of soldiers returning from the eastern front who had been tainted by communist influences.

In occupied Russia, many thousands of German soldiers had come into touch with bolshevism; since the outbreak of Russian revolution, Bolshevik propagandist tried with all their strength to bring about fraternization between the German and Russian armies. There was ample evidence that their efforts had not been entirely in vain.”²²²

Therefore, the need arose for 'specially raised and trained volunteer troops.' This event, coupled with the formation of a civil guard (*Freiwillige Volkswehr*), the National Congress of Soldiers and the Workers Council's resolutions for the dismissal of Hindenburg and the passage of the 'Hamburg points' (which greatly restricted army powers; i.e., officer corps), prompted Groener and Kurt von Schleicher to arrive in Berlin and then again threatened to withdraw support for Ebert's government unless the Hamburg points were "rejected out of hand.”²²³

the high command believed the moderate social democrats had let themselves be intimidated [by the left].²²⁴

Ebert's actions infuriated the Independent socialists (USPD) who tried to take Ebert prisoner. The army deployed to the Marstall in Berlin (site of 1848 deployment to suppress riots), and when surrounded by crowds, Prussian guards dropped their weapons

²²² F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 7

²²³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 343

²²⁴ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 19

and ran. This very humiliating event caused the Independents and the spartacists to stop cooperation with the Ebert government and the elements of the supreme command advocated disolvment. Groener stood firm and initiated the utilization of a previously discussed plan to mobilize volunteers to replace war-weary troops in order to fight the revolution. He stated:

The maintenance of the authority of the government must remain the objective of the army. Since they had failed to maintain it by means of the war-weary troops brought back from France, they must find new troops; and the logical solution was to revert to a plan discussed in the past, to concentrate on raising volunteers, or *Freikorps*.²²⁵

The *Freikorps* represented the utilization and semi-official recognition of quasi-paramilitary organizations working on behalf of the army to preserve the nation. These implications would reemerge again in the violent 1930's under the direction of the SA (*Sturmabteilung*).

In January of 1919, both communists and socialists demonstrated and rioted in Berlin; the army was ineffective and the *Freikorps* was several days away from readiness. This moment is crucial, as the leaders of the Independents and the Spartacists were again indecisive as to how best save the revolution; no course of action could be agreed upon to overthrow the Ebert government. The government/army had for the second time (1848), been saved by the indecisiveness of the leadership of the revolution, and after several days, the crowd's motivation had died out and momentum swung towards Ebert.²²⁶

While the momentum for the revolution had died out and its leaders were trying to negotiate with Ebert, the army had had enough. The *Freikorps* were now ready, and the army realized the opportunity that presented itself; the destruction of bolshevism and its implications to the 'officer corps' was now at hand and could not be ignored, as in 1848. January 1919 saw the beginning of bloody suppression by the *Freikorps* of insurrections. Over the next several months, the systematic re-conquest of German cities by the *Freikorps* crushed the bolshevist movement. The unique aspect of this was that the 'old officer corps' utilized a volunteer militia, who they had long since opposed as a threat to

²²⁵ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 355

²²⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 359

their dynastic right, to eliminate a far greater threat to their legacy. The army's display of force to crush the opposition and restore order resulted in no further attempts by the National Assembly to push the Hamburg points. The delegate's primary concern was insuring the strength of army for restoration of law and order; thus, insuring their place within the government. These events greatly compromised the new governments position on future army reforms and,

they were entirely willing to leave the internal administration and command of the army in the hands of the old officer corps.²²⁷

The March 6, 1919, law creating the Provisional *Reichswehr* (although it called for an 'army built on democratic basis') had insured the maintenance of the status quo by the manner in which future officers were allowed to be chosen. This insured the social composition of the officer class and preservation of the 'imperial officer corps.'

The Reichswehr grew out of these free corps, and the old officer corps, above all the general staff, was the principal factor in its formation. It is impossible to answer the question whether there was an alternative way of forming an efficient republican army; but there can be no doubt that there were democratic officers who might have been willing to serve in such an army.²²⁸

One of the causes of the increased functional and social narrowness of the officer corps...was [the] attempt to restore the homogeneity, which had been broken by the war and which was an important precondition of the claim to a political elite status. [Thus] the post war army Reichswehr was more strongly dominated by a leadership drawn from the nobility and the bourgeoisie than had been the case before or during the war.²²⁹

1. Analysis

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the chiefs of staff and commanders in chief of the Prusso-German army thought of war, once it had broken out, as an essentially autonomous activity, and did everything in their power to protect the army, its strategy and its operations, from political interference.²³⁰

²²⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 362

²²⁸ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 23

²²⁹ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 25

²³⁰ Peter Paret, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, 212

In past crisis, the army's prestigious role in the state had been saved by foreign victory, Bismarck's political maneuvering, and middle class fears of chaos and instability. On this occasion, the fear of communism and chaos by the middle class, combined with the moderate socialist political maneuvering, had provided the army with the means and opportunity in which to crush this emerging threat to their 'old imperial order,' and the use of non-professional soldiers (*Freikorps*) to insure their survival and the survival of their institution. The army was able to identify the weakness of the fledgling republic, and on several episodes, threaten to withhold support unless the government acquiesced to the military's demands. The army leadership realized that,

so deep...was the fear of communism and so skillful its exploitation by the military chiefs, that by the middle of the 1920s, the army was well on its way to becoming once more the state within the state that it had always been in the past."²³¹

That the Weimar government existed as long as it did is due to army support. That support, however, was not something which could be commanded by the government; it was something which was granted by the army.²³²

Ironically, the army's ability to play upon the instability and subsequent fears of the middle class created just the crises needed by the army to maintain its position. Thus, the same middle class that for over a century was despised by the army, who repeatedly attempted to prevent the bourgeoisie from tainting the ranks of their aristocratic officer corps, provided the very reason for their continued viability to the German state after the collapse of the monarch. The relationship of the army to the middle class thus became a mutual dependant relationship in which each group needed the other as justification for its existence in the face of emerging bolshevism. The army's attitude towards the series of events from 1918-20 can best be summed up by a quote from General Von Luttwitz, who stated in august 1919:

Today, as yesterday, the army remains the basis of authority in the State.²³³

²³¹ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 343

²³² Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 106-107

²³³ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 343

The army had once again managed to avoid significant reform, neither war, defeat, revolution or the post-war era evoked any essential modification in the basic political goals and ideals of the military elite. In fact, those goals emerged more clearly cut and unequivocal.²³⁴

Unfortunately, by advocating political demands and by allying itself with right wing elements of former soldiers, the General Staff set in motion a dangerous precedent that would politicize the younger officer corps over the next ten years.

from the generals, the tendency to put forward political demands spread to the lower echelons.²³⁵

The German officer corps at large was not ready to share military control, which is perhaps the strongest indication of the political mood in the officer corps at the time.²³⁶

This ten-year period saw former soldiers turning increasingly towards Fascism and National Socialism where they found the call to action that desperately appealed to them. The integration and cohesion of extremist ideas by these groups saw the rise of the SA and other rightwing Para-military groups that were far more organized than the *Freikorps* and less susceptible to military control.

Those who supported nationalist revolution [*Freikorps*] failed to emerge as a serious force because of their own fragmentation and the relatively swift consolidation of republic. Many were later to be found in the SA [*Sturmabteilung*] and the SS [*Schutzstaffel*].²³⁷

Leaders of Nationalistic forces began to emerge as a powerful political and social factor in post war Germany.

The ideas of the late 18th and 19th century were radically reinterpreted following the conclusion of World War I. Payne observed that, from

1914-1933 Germany experienced a sequence of traumas unparalleled in the history of any European country during that generation.²³⁸

²³⁴ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 25

²³⁵ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 62

²³⁶ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 564

²³⁷ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 23

²³⁸ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 148

These events, combined with the post-war chaos, economic crisis, and a sense of defeat created a situation in which people, searching for an identity and something to place their faith in, turned towards fascism to fill the void. The cry for a strong government led to fascism.”²³⁹ Fascism was the most revolutionary form of nationalism in Europe. It was characterized by its culture of philosophical idealism, will power, vitalism, and mysticism along with the moralistic concept of therapeutic violence that appealed to veterans. This concept strongly identified with military values, outward aggressiveness, and empire.²⁴⁰

Fascism presented itself as a third alternative to capitalism or socialism, which promised to protect the position of middle classes through the establishment of an all-powerful corporatist state.²⁴¹

These ideas offered an alternative to communism and democracy that was more German in nature. Fascism was the only genuine form of radicalism emerging from World War I.²⁴²

The World War I years, and the ensuing misery, poverty, and humiliation, created a social and political environment in which these ideas could be translated into political reality.²⁴³

C. POST WORLD WAR I: NATIONALISM INTO MILITARISM

Out of the chaos of World War I, Germany emerged a shell of its former self; internationally, the European balance of power was destroyed, while domestically, the goals and ambitions of German people for the past century were shattered.

The continuity of government, culture, and institutions in much of Europe were shattered by the impact of World War I.²⁴⁴

The political fragmentation of the continent was matched by its economic fragmentation.²⁴⁵

²³⁹ Donald Abenheim, *NS 4023, Class Discussion*

²⁴⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 488

²⁴¹ Val Burris, *The Discovery of the New Middle Class*, *Theory and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (May, 1986), 317-349

²⁴² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 441

²⁴³ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 115

²⁴⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 71

Germany was forced to deal with the added burden of guilt and war reparations imposed by the vengeful allies and dictated to the Germany's newly established civilian government.

The impact on culture and social psychology was equally profound; the trend towards optimism and faith in progress characteristic of the preceding century and a half was increasingly questioned and often rejected.²⁴⁶

Payne believes that, "Under the strain of war, German society appeared slowly to dissolve into angry factions."²⁴⁷ The release of this emotion can best be articulated in a quote from Adolph Hitler, who reflected upon hearing of the German capitulation wrote,

I had not cried since the day I stood beside my mother's grave, but now I could not help it. During those nights my hatred increased, hatred for the originators of this dastardly crime.²⁴⁸

Thus, pre-war nationalism combined with post-war chaos formed the foundation for the radical ideas of fascism. The radical elements of the nationalist movement in post war Europe took the foundations of nationalism and corrupted the ideas, moving the theory in a dangerous direction; full of intolerance, racial hatred, and justification of violence for violence sake. The corruption of nationalistic ideas and the application of these policies is the basis for fascist evolution in the political arena.

The experiences of World War I...were required for the crystallization of these intellectual currents into fascism.²⁴⁹

The feelings of nationalism before World War I reemerged with vitality and were radicalized by the perversion of the emotion of 'August days' as an outlet for the millions of young combat tested and aggressive veterans who joined the *Freikorps*, in search of action.

There is sense only in danger, marching into uncertainty is sense enough for us, because it answers the demands of our blood.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁵ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 282

²⁴⁶ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 282

²⁴⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 79

²⁴⁸ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 15

²⁴⁹ Myra Moss, *On The Origin and Evolution of European Fascism*, 8

Added to this emotion were the “so called Generation of 1902, who joined up to make up for the action not seen during the war.”²⁵¹

Engagement was the point, as political stakes were often irrelevant. War had fashioned compelling images of national solidarity that would largely determine the politics of the postwar era.²⁵²

This vein of emotion, expression by the radicalized veterans and the youthfully energetic, was tapped into by fascist looking for an audience to ignite behind their political banner of change. The pre-war patriotism of nationalism did not die with the defeat of World War I but was reborn and redirected in ‘German days’ or ‘*Stahlhelm* Days,’ attracting thousands of patriots to marches and giving them a:

politically confident and forward looking quality to the nationalist sociability. These large public gatherings provided compelling visual affirmation of the cherished *Volksgemeinschaft*.²⁵³

The disillusionment of World War I cast doubt on rationality as fundamental to civilization. Because of this disillusionment, the belief that a dramatic new direction for western civilization was required if it were to survive, emerged.

Here was a widespread recognition that prewar political life had been too socially exclusive, too compliant to the interests of economic elites, and too ignorant of the contributions of ordinary citizens. The great opportunity of the war was to recast German politics in a more socially inclusive and self-reliant mold.²⁵⁴

Many people who had thought of the war as a means of “purification” changed their minds. They viewed war as neither a purgatory nor a vehicle of renewal. But they recognized that it had destroyed the old, stable framework of society and created an opportunity to pursue the social and national aspirations that had been fermenting for decades.²⁵⁵

The additional feeling of humiliation and double-cross by the treaty of Versailles left the new German state weakened by the war, susceptible to popular socialist

²⁵⁰ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 125

²⁵¹ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 125

²⁵² Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 81

²⁵³ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 135

²⁵⁴ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 51

²⁵⁵ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 115

movements that threatened the fragile parliamentary government. The intense patriotism that was aroused by World War I led to wide support for right wing nationalistic movements that preached confrontation and victory over the political disorder of the period.

The goal of disintegration of modern society and the unifying experience of war viewed in aesthetic terms fueled the message that a new nation must arise like a phoenix from the ashes; this was the quintessential experience that inspired the generation of 1914.²⁵⁶

The middle class and elite were especially susceptible to the rhetoric of National Socialism out of a spreading fear of communism throughout Europe due to the collapse of the Russian government.

As previously mentioned, the ideas and concepts of fascism were first articulated in France during the revolutionary period and then debated by various sources over the next hundred years. It took the chaos of World War I and the post war dissonance to begin to merge these ideas in a period of political discontent and turmoil, the likes that Europe had never seen. Out of this chaos, fascism began to be seen as a viable political movement by those who believed and advocated its principles. In the beginning, fascism drew on a combination of left and right wing ideas that relied heavily on the characteristics of nationalism, (i.e. productivism, anti-Socialism, elitism) and the need for a strong leader. The increasing fear and insecurity of the different classes (industrialist and middle class) to socialism and communism compounded by the overall lack of faith in traditional pre-war and emerging post-war political systems, created a climate for this 'third way.' The fascist parties held out the promise of this needed security in an unprecedented form.²⁵⁷ The modification of nationalism to a xenophobic ideology was the beginning of the frightening path, which ultimately led Germany again to war.

D. MILITARISM INTO FASCISM INTO BROADER MASS APPEAL

Thus, the characteristics of fascism began to solidify to any and every audience that would listen with the primary focus on unemployed veterans.

²⁵⁶ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 253

²⁵⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 288

These listeners were desperate, hunted men, tormented by demons, hungry for miracles and thrills, caring nothing for contradictions in political manifestos, logical errors, or factual discrepancies. The 'Führer' demanded their faith and devotion and offered in return certainty and security in a new community that would protect and care for them: that was what their followers were looking for, and that was what they found.²⁵⁸

Throughout the next fourteen years, interest groups would lurch from populist, even egalitarian postures to darker, more aggressively antisocialist positions. One thing was clear: over the course of war and revolution, Germans had developed a regular mania for speaking out, [Redewut] as one beleaguered chairman put it.²⁵⁹

These youthful veterans, who were disillusioned with the hangover of emotions from 'August days,' were in search of an ideal or cause to believe in and justify their sacrifice for their country. Fascism, with its glorification of war and violence, willingness to struggle against all odds, dignity of mad heroism, emphasis on the greatness of dying for the cause in war, justified and validated their efforts on behalf of their country; and allowed them to continue the struggle against a new enemy or an old one.

Fascism encouraged activism, the fight against the existing order of things (Mosse) to remake the human world, to forge a new future. There was a desire to finish what 'had been started' and recapture the momentum from 'august days.' This growing movement was strongly felt by a generation tested by the hardships of war. They refused to settle for the conditions dictated to them by the allies, and imposition of a democratic form of government (Weimar Republic) forced upon them by "Anglo-American and French liberalism."²⁶⁰

The National Socialist appealed to the masses [for two reasons]; demand for political involvement, already awakened for many decades and since 1918/19 ever more wide spread; and...to the broad resentment felt against the 'un-German' Weimar system, 'un-German' because allegedly imposed from above.²⁶¹

²⁵⁸ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 288

²⁵⁹ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 100

²⁶⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 149

²⁶¹ Heinrich August Winkler, Choosing the Lesser Evil: The German Social Democrats and the Fall of the Weimar Republic, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25, No. 2/3 (May-June, 1990), 205-227

Democracy was despised, viewed as weak and idle representing compromise when action was required. Increasingly radical right-wing elements called for the immediate and violent change to the existing government

History is made in the street; the street is the political characteristic of this age.²⁶²

Germans refused to return to the former political structure; due to a widespread lack of confidence in the historical political systems organic to Europe. This evolving aggressive attitude infiltrated many areas of German society, including the military, where enlisted and junior officers started voicing a more activist stance towards the Weimar government and viewed perceived inaction on the part of the senior leadership as cooperation and/or compromise with the left leaning *Reichstag*. Not only was there animosity towards democracy among the general population and the junior leadership of the military, but the attitude of the General Staff towards the parliamentary system can best be summed up by General Hans von Seeckt, who as the post-war Commander in Chief of the *Reichswehr* was exceedingly critical of the Weimar Constitution and the parties which created and supported it.²⁶³

Seeckt also had a strong antipathy to parliament and the parliamentary system. He described parliament as ‘the cancer of our time’.²⁶⁴

These ideas and opinions, although more predominant in the lower and middle classes, had now began to permeate across class boundaries.

The movement’s vague, catch-all ideology, emphasizing integrations and community by negation, met its need to attract different groups with varying interests and goals.²⁶⁵

While not all Nazi beliefs were viewed as universal truths by all segments of society, each section was able to extract the particular aspects that were beneficial to them and either disregard or ignore the rest.

²⁶² Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 90; Quoting Joseph Goebbels, ‘*Die Strasse*,’ *Nationalsozialistische Briefe*, No. 17, June 1, 1926

²⁶³ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 116

²⁶⁴ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 120

²⁶⁵ Peter Baldwin, Social Interpretations of Nazism: Renewing a Tradition, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25. No. 1 (Jan., 1990), 5-37

Many traditional elites, those who as a whole had no reason to be attracted by the Nazis immediate appeal, eventually gave their support to the party because it was able to serve a function that they (given their preferences) would have assigned others. For churchmen, civil servants, military officers, the party's appeal was primary tactical. Rearmament, anti-communism, law and order, a supposed reaffirmation of traditional values...made the Nazis palatable, despite misgivings.²⁶⁶

This growing trend towards contempt for the 'November criminals' and their perceived impotence when action was required, combined with the belief in a 'superior German culture,' was fundamental in the furtherance of National Socialism.

Other ingredients [of fascism] involved the application of military metaphors to political life, the psychological mobilization of the masses for civil war, and glorification of action for its own sake. It was the primacy of action over reason that constitute the basically irrational character of National Socialist and Fascist propaganda and ensured its effectiveness in the fight against the scarcely credible programs of the Conservative, Liberal, and Socialist democratic parties. The myths of the nation and of race played a prominent part in the pronouncements of the Fascist and National Socialist parties. Behind the accusation that democracies had betrayed the nation lay an inflated, indeed absolute adulation of the 'nation,' with the party and its leader as its sole champions and representatives. In most cases the burning issue was the revision of the outcome of the First World War, often entailing even more extensive territorial demands.²⁶⁷

Fascism unlike Nationalism, Imperialism, Socialism and Bolshivism, was the only significant new idea to emerge from the chaos of World War I and interwar period.

Therein lay the genius of fascism; it appealed to different segments of society and appeared to address their grievances or issues. Although without a defined plan and with just the 'call for action,' fascism inspired hope among its adherents to a greater force to effect change and correct political and/or social class problems of integration, restoring Germany once again to its rightful 'place in the sun.'

Modern mass society allowed the Nazis to attract a following from across the social spectrum. The party offered an antidote to anomie, atomization and deracination, holding out a lamp to the millions cut loose from primary

²⁶⁶ Peter Baldwin, Social Interpretations of Nazism: Renewing a Tradition, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25. No. 1 (Jan., 1990), 5-37

²⁶⁷ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 287

ties of family and intermediary associations to drift unmoored on the seas of a hypertrophied *Gesellschaft*.²⁶⁸

At its roots, National Socialist ideology contained only one tangible idea: the idea of struggle.²⁶⁹

E. POST-WAR APPEAL OF FASCISM

The origins of integral national fascism and National Socialism originate from a wide variety of conditions prevalent throughout Europe during the 18th to 20th century. They drew on emerging ideas from a diverse collection of writers, intellectuals, philosophers, and intelligentsia in reaction to ongoing social, political and economic issues. Nationalism, racism, and irrationalism emerged as characteristics of fascism. These traits were incorporated into a strong reinterpretation of culture, Social Darwinism and youth; in combination with mysticism, race and religion to form a fascist ideology unique to Nazi Germany. This ideology emphasized a love of violence and war; rejecting the liberal democratic institutions which were viewed as weak, ineffective, and passive. Social renewal was based on the national community, by popularizing myths of national, cultural, or ethnic renewal. Fascism strongly believed that the state symbolized the people and embodied the national will; this was integral to fascist ideology.

No single factor was of crucial importance by itself, but only insofar as it converged, or was unable to converge with other influences.²⁷⁰

What matters is not so much what we believe; only that we believe.²⁷¹

The contributing factors that made National Socialism so destructive were the myths of national greatness and a belief in a destiny of achieving national military power. These ideas, combined with influences from the romantic era and fused with pseudo-scientific theories of race, genetics, and eugenics to breed a new master race.²⁷²

²⁶⁸ Peter Baldwin, Social Interpretations of Nazism: Renewing a Tradition, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 25. No. 1 (Jan., 1990), 5-37

²⁶⁹ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 71

²⁷⁰ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 494

²⁷¹ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 86; Quoting Joseph Goebbels, *Kampf um Berlin* (Munich, 1933)

²⁷² Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 196

Fascism tended to be hostile towards other liberal and socialist ideologies due to its desire to create a renewed, or unified, national or ethnic community. It was strongly opposed to doctrines of conservatism, liberalism, individualism, materialism, and communism. Fascism was against all scientific, economic, religious, academic, cultural and leisure activities that did not see their vision of national life or the avocation for the expansion of territory.

Consistent with the Romantic conception of self and nation, fascism called for the construction of a state--with unified political and economic institutions, and definite geographical borders--upon the nation, composed of persons bound together by language, history and culture.²⁷³

The middle class crisis of post-war Germany was capitalized on by fascism. The Middle class believed it could forge a new system, through activism and participation that would correct a “previously denied status among the social elite.”²⁷⁴ This participation would insure a more important role domestically, thereby resulting in the eventually restoration of Germany’s rightful international role, destroyed by the outcome of the First World War I.

The traumatic experience after the first World War, its degradation into a second-class power at precisely that historical moment when it had every prospect of becoming a first-class world power. [was a bitter burden for the middle class to bear]²⁷⁵

Fascism appealed to the fears and desires of the middle class, and promised fulfillment of their goals and protection from their fears of socialism and communism. Whereas,

liberal democracy had lost from the start, not because it was liberal, but because it was dull and an obstacle to those thrilling experiences for which the spirit of the time yearned...right and left both agreed, what mattered to both extreme movements was the shaping of the future.²⁷⁶

²⁷³ Myra Moss, *On The Origin and Evolution of European Fascism*, 2

²⁷⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 45

²⁷⁵ Ivan T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis: Central and Eastern Europe before World War II*, 75

²⁷⁶ Peter Fritzsche, *Germans into Nazis*, 135

F. YOUTH MOVEMENT

He alone, who owns the youth, gains the Future!²⁷⁷

The early 19th century saw the development of gymnastic and youth associations, these athletic associations propagated a distinctly militant brand of nationalistic ideology in many countries in the early 1800s, especially Germany.²⁷⁸

These organizations shared a common thread,

three key ideas; a mixture of physical culture, character training, and patriotic propaganda, promoting the national ideal.²⁷⁹

[they emphasized] a longing for new forms of community, aroused even before the war by the youth movement and confirmed and reinforced by the legendary comradeship of the front.²⁸⁰

These clubs (*Turnvereine*) and societies tended to be inspired by patriotic motives. These organizations, coupled with the late 19th century, “emphasis on fresh air, and the outdoor life, encouraged the reaffirmation of the physical, a new emphasis on restoring contact with nature.”²⁸¹ These years are attributed to the genesis of 20th century youth culture, youth movements, nature societies, and the rapid expansion of organized sports.”²⁸² Fascist were best able to capitalize on these trends by incorporating nationalism into their youth movements, increasing their attractiveness over competing youth activities and furthering their ‘bottom up’ social integration.²⁸³

Fascist exaltation of youth was unique, not only did it make a special appeal to them but exalted youth over all other generations, without exception, and to a greater degree than any other force based itself on generational conflict.²⁸⁴

²⁷⁷ Adolf Hitler, *Speech at the Reichsparteitag*, 1935

²⁷⁸ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 189

²⁷⁹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 189

²⁸⁰ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 138

²⁸¹ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 190

²⁸² Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 190

²⁸³ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 39

²⁸⁴ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 13

This exaltation partially stemmed from the organic concept of the nation, and of youth as its new life force, and from the predominance of youth in struggle through militarization. Fascism catered ideas to the youth who were not as prudent or materialistic as older more established generations.

The fascist cult of daring, action and the will to a new ideal was inherently attuned to youth who could respond in ways that the older generation was unable or unwilling too.²⁸⁵

By the 1920s all major political parties had youth groups. This emphasis on youth was for two reasons; the high birthrate prior to World War I led to an overabundance of men between the ages of 15-25 and the horrific mortality rate suffered during the war by males now 26 to 50 created a pronounced generation gap. ²⁸⁶

By encouraging enrollment in these youth organizations, National Socialist were able to accelerate their indoctrination of the young through the emphasis of creating a new society; their goal of creating a new type of culture in which values, politics, art, social norms and economic activity were all part of a single organic national community (*volksgemeinschaft*) founded around concept of racial purity.

[In] European fascist countries, art architecture, and literature became vehicles of propaganda which served to unify citizens with one another and with their nation-state.²⁸⁷

This infatuation with youth was designed to produce new generations of racially pure Germans, politically indoctrinated and physically fit to provide the fatherland with the unquestioning leadership and blind obedience required of its soldiers for the future. The goal of the Nazi youth program was:

To steel the bodies of our youth, to educate them in discipline, and devotion to the common great ideal to train them in the organizational and instructional service of the movement.²⁸⁸

²⁸⁵ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 14

²⁸⁶ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 163

²⁸⁷ Myra Moss, *On The Origin and Evolution of European Fascism*, 2

²⁸⁸ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 142

The education and indoctrination of youth was integral to the re-ascending of Germany to power, out of the ashes of post-war chaos and defeat. The Nazis managed to attract and eventually mobilize over 80 percent of youth into Hitler youth programs before 1939.²⁸⁹

The pre-military preparation of Germany's youth combined organizational principles such as group loyalty and absolute obedience to superiors--individual qualifications which put physical stamina far above intellectual ability--and certain ideological tenants, the most important of which were racism, anti-Bolshevism, expansionism, and a quasi-religious faith in the Fuhrer, who constituted both the supreme authority, the embodiment of the Volk, and the arbiter of Germany's destiny.²⁹⁰

G. GENERATION GAP WITHIN OFFICER CORPS

The officer corps that had gone into action in 1914 with common perceptions and traditions had by 1915-1916 been supplanted by a new breed of officer from lower social strata with a much different outlook...lacking the intense traditional bond to the crown...[and] were open to new political ideologies...[with] a tendency toward a more outspoken ideology of nationalism, ambition, and military daring²⁹¹

Lesson's drawn from the battlefields of Europe after World War I indicated that the future wars would be fought by a

new generation of officers who required technical specialties in [the] growing complexity of military apparatus.²⁹²

These technological advancements in the art of war would require an officer corps that was technically and tactically proficient in the age of industrial warfare. The 'total war' concept that the General Staff envisioned would require trained officers as never before. This changing warfare was the initial cleavage in what was to become an ever-widening gap between the 'old staff' officers of the General Staff and a new generation of officers lead by 'line' officers of the First World War. Thus at the end of the war,

²⁸⁹ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 192

²⁹⁰ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 117

²⁹¹ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 27

²⁹² Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 21

older officers (division commanders and above) ‘were in no way prepared for their new task and had little understanding of political questions.

Their [older officers] political ideas were those of the Hohenzollern empire, while the new republican world was alien to them.²⁹³

The opportunity that Germany had, in the years 1918-1920, to rethink the role of force in domestic and international relations was never exploited and for the most part was not even recognized.²⁹⁴

In the aftermath of the 1920 Kapp Putsch, General Hans von Seeckt assumed control of the *Reichswehr*. It has been said that the only clear winner was Seeckt who was able to gain the leadership of the *Reichswehr* and guide in with his strong hand in the manner he saw fit.

Seeckt was able, through force of will, to “halt developing schisms within the officer corps immediately after the war by forcing the *Reichswehr* into a state of solidarity by his rigorously one-sided policy,”²⁹⁵ Seeckt successfully avoided efforts by democratic authority (*Reichstag*) to interfere in military matters, and through the use of symbology refocused the *Reichswehr* on what he believed was their traditional role in society.

The army should become a state within the state, but it should be merged in the State through service, in fact it should itself become the purest image of the State.²⁹⁶

The primary concern of German military planners in the interwar years was to limit war in order to make it, once again, a purposeful and instrumental use of force on the basis of elite control of strategy.²⁹⁷

However, Seeckt’s efforts were eventually co-opted by the Nazis who exploited his original intentions.

²⁹³ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 192

²⁹⁴ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 555

²⁹⁵ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 236

²⁹⁶ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 111; Quoting Seeckt, *Thoughts of a Soldier*, 5-6

²⁹⁷ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 554

Seeckt's concept of military tradition, which served as an ideological bulwark against party politics, later made soldiers susceptible to the appeal of the Nazis, who were clever enough to recognize and use the power of symbols to the fullest.²⁹⁸

After Seeckt's departure, it became progressively more difficult to maintain the unity of the officer corps on the foundation of his ideas.

From the outset, the army command had attempted to prevent the army from being influenced by party politics and political extremism. This was easily achieved with regard to communist propaganda. All its efforts at winning over Reichswehr soldiers were defeated by their patriotic and nationalist convictions, which were the antithesis of communist ideas.²⁹⁹

It was entirely different with regard to the ideas of National Socialism. They made little impression on the older officers, as many observers and witnesses of the time have testified. The older officers had grown up in the world of German Empire and remained loyal to it, in spite of war and revolution, or perhaps because of them. Their opinions were strictly conservative and 'black, white, and red.'³⁰⁰

The use of internal repression was found to have its limits to the extent to which the 'state within a state' ideology lost its unifying power.³⁰¹

The Ulm incident of 1929 and subsequent *Reichswehr* trial was the chasm between the political views of older staff vs. younger line officers within the officer corps. The majority of younger officers commissioned after the war were nearly unanimous in their support while the older generation were united against them.³⁰²

The accused officers were convinced that there was a gulf between the army command and the 'front' of the army that the bureaucratic leadership could not be trusted, and that it was therefore essential to act without it. The officer corps was no longer united.³⁰³

²⁹⁸ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 291

²⁹⁹ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 308

³⁰⁰ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 310

³⁰¹ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 27

³⁰² F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 317

³⁰³ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 319

The lieutenant's conspiracy revealed not only a youthful activism and the widely aired antagonism between the 'desk bound generals in Berlin and officers of the line'.³⁰⁴

The trial demonstrated the growing cleavage between old and new, (staff and line) younger officers began to articulate a lack of confidence in the leadership of the Reichswehr, which they strongly believed was controlled by the despised and ineffective parliament.³⁰⁵

A gulf began to open between the young officers and their seniors which was deeper than the differences usually separating the generations.³⁰⁶

Letters written at the time of the trial by numerous officers refer to the growing influence of nationalistic and patriotic propaganda on younger members of the officer corps. In effect, a 'bottom up' change of attitude was beginning to take hold of not only the working class masses who made up the enlisted ranks, but also an increasing percent of the junior leadership of the army.

With the passage of time, the tensions between innovation and the cult of the past tended to divided the generations of officer. These social and political cleavages in the officer corps intensified as the prewar generation departed or rose to senior positions, and less tradition-bound officers grew in number.³⁰⁷

This social condition was the main factor in the 'us vs. them' mentality of junior officers and 'enlisted vs. pre-war' 'old school' officers educated and indoctrinated with conservative, monarchist, Prussian three class franchise system.

the letters prove how strongly even young officers, who disapproved of the steps taken by the three lieutenants and who were not national socialist, were influenced by the slogans of the extreme right, by its propaganda against the 'system' of Weimar and the office generals.³⁰⁸

The National Socialist revolutionary élan, their repudiation of the Versailles and the Weimar system, [and] exaggerated nationalism were

³⁰⁴ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 28

³⁰⁵ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 321

³⁰⁶ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 313

³⁰⁷ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 14

³⁰⁸ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 321

extremely attractive to young men who came from the same social groups as many young national socialist and had the same basic ideas.³⁰⁹

The military leadership under William Groener and Kurt von Schleicher was very aware of the growing nationalistic views of the younger officers. Groener visited the of the Potsdam Cavalry Regiment's officer's mess to try and sway the lieutenants in favor of restraint.³¹⁰

In a letter to the Chief of Army Command General Heye, his son Lt. Heye concisely described the feelings of many company grade officers:

there could be no obedience without confidence; and confidence in the political leadership was missing.³¹¹

Verifying the gulf developing within the officer corps and the lack of senior leadership's ability to understand the younger generation was an attempt on their part to issue orders instructing officers to separate themselves from the politics of the day and concentrate upon their military duties. While this attempt most certainly would have worked in the pre-war non political army, the increasingly post-war politicized, right leaning officer corps ignored these instructions.

It was politically naïve to believe that 'a simple briefing of the officers' would counter the ever growing radicalism among Germanys youth, or that rational arguments would avail against emotion and enthusiasm. These orders showed how badly informed Groener and Schleicher were about the mood among the young officers and how helpless they were in coping with it.³¹²

An additional letter written by Lt. Heye further elaborates on the chasm between officer corps, whereas before the war, orders and directives were followed without question, the younger generation wanted to know what was being done and why. The failure of the free flow of information down the chain of command only exacerbated the situation as younger officers felt the older officers failed to act or had no plan to right the wrongs of Weimar.

³⁰⁹ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 311

³¹⁰ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 313

³¹¹ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 322

³¹² F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 322

young officers... are not pro-Nazi because of the Nazi program, but because they believe they discover here a force which fights the decline of the Reich, which does what they expect from the *Reichswehr*.³¹³

In general, however the lectures had little success with their efforts to abate the tension which existed between the ministry and the 'front' of the Reichswehr. The majority of the officer's, who received their information exclusively from the right wing press, simply did not understand the policy of the army command.³¹⁴

While not specifically national socialist, but rather national revolutionary, derived from the ideology of the free corps and other extreme nationalist formations. It also reflected the ideas of Scharnhorst and the radical soldiers of the war of liberation against Napoleon, assuming that Germany in 1929 faced the same situation.³¹⁵

Younger officers 'embittered about the bad chances of promotion in *Reichswehr* and about the many incapable staff officers of pre-war times who occupy the post of command.³¹⁶

To a growing number of younger officers and citizens alike, fascism seemed like the only viable solution to a weak and ineffective government and military. National Socialism was not the product of these events but would have been impossible without them.³¹⁷

H. HITLER'S MILITARY APPEAL

The German state had a long tradition of authoritarian government, and many Germans associated the liberalization of the government with the outbreak of war, and more importantly, the devastation of the post-war period. Many sought a return to the old ways, believing that modern, liberal beliefs had sacrificed German honor and allowed the state to depreciate in the name of freedom. Hitler offered not freedom, but rather security.³¹⁸

Hitler's increasing popularity and his right wing militarism, appealed to some within the army's senior leadership. Individual members of the General Staff began to

³¹³ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 312

³¹⁴ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 313

³¹⁵ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 316

³¹⁶ F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 316

³¹⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 148

³¹⁸ www.sparknotes.com/history/european/interwaryears

view National Socialism as a vehicle that would facilitate the army in attaining its two primary goals; the reintegration of the army to the society and an authoritarian government with which to restore Germany's military strength to pre-war status as a European hegemon. Thus:

The leaders of the *Reichswehr* came increasingly to recognize the gulf that was opening between their political aspirations and their ability to realize them. [Further] developments in domestic politics in the late 20s made their inability to do so more apparent.³¹⁹

While many senior officers upheld traditional social, political, and military values, they were attracted to Hitler, not least because he made possible the rapid modernization of the army.³²⁰

Several members of the 'old guard' recognized the opportunity to rally the masses behind the post-war goals of the military through the cooperation with National Socialism.

Blomberg and Reichenau, along with a growing circle of officers-especially young ones-considered the senior members of the Army Directorate to be hopelessly old fashioned, out of step with the times, and perhaps even dangerous to the political survival of the army as an institution.³²¹

Hitler's election victory September 1930, celebrated by [Ludwig von] Beck in the officers mess, that at that time, he was certainly an exception among the senior officers. It was different with many young officers who had been schoolboys during the world war and for whom the Empire was a mere shadow of the past.³²²

Among the younger officers, National Socialism and their promise of rearmament offered yet another profound advantage over the perceived impotency of the Weimar government.

Among the young officers, a considerable minority clearly opted for the activist NSDAP, not only for reasons of national temperament and because of the inactivity and weakness of the Republican authority, but

³¹⁹ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 28

³²⁰ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 4

³²¹ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 27

³²² F. L. Carsten, *The Reichswehr and Politics 1918-1933*, 311

also from professional resentment at seeing themselves condemned to a 'career in the second rank' by the restriction to a hundred-thousand-man army.³²³

When National Socialism, with its new, nationalistic slogans, appeared upon the scene, the younger elements of the Officer Corps were soon inflamed by the patriotic theories propounded by Hitler and his followers.³²⁴

With the appointment of Hitler to Chancellor in January of 1933, the army began expanding the ranks of the Reichswehr officer corps, nearly doubling the total of 3,800 in October 1933 to 6,553 in 1934, with a goal of 13,000 by 1941.³²⁵ This coupled with the reintroduction of universal conscription in 1935 with a goal of 35 divisions served to dilute the number of 'old guard' officers and in effect minimized their ability to limit the influence of National Socialism within the ranks.

The introduction of universal conscription swiftly expanded the army and further undermined the homogeneity of the old cadres. This coupled with the expansion of state and party agencies of repression; i.e., Gestapo and the SD [*Sicherheitsdienst*] all contributed to weaken the position of the military elite. All the time that the basis for the realization of its (army's) own foreign policy goals seemed to be much improved.³²⁶

The influx of new officers also had political repercussions. As the number of officer's increased, the army had to accept many who were already dedicated Nazis. Nazism had been creeping into the officer corps for some time, but now took on a whole new dimension.³²⁷

As the number of Nazi officers grew, the unity of the officer corps, which was vital to good discipline and efficiency, as well as to political stability, slipped away. The army became increasingly polarized between those few older officers who, like Fritsch and Beck, wanted to keep the part at arms length and a growing number of younger officers who wanted the army to become a thoroughly national socialist institution. Thus, the political element of the debate exacerbated the normal generational conflict that occurs in large organizations everywhere.³²⁸

³²³ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 236

³²⁴ Heinz Guderian, *Panzer Leader*, 440

³²⁵ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 30

³²⁶ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 35

³²⁷ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 31

³²⁸ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 31

Petty jealousies, ambition, and the use of influence to gain promotion became more and more the rule rather than the exception.³²⁹

In response to the dwindling influence of pre-war traditions, the army's senior leadership tried hard after 1935 to create a new sense of esprit de corps within the officer corps, applying a mixture of Nazi doctrines they found practical, in combination with pre-war army traditions. These attempts proved unsuccessful.

The officer corps was a long way from dissolution, but neither was it the spiritually unified structure it had been in the 20s.³³⁰

Indeed, ever since the collapse of the Kaiserheer, the German officer corps had been searching for a new set of ideas that would form the crucial link between effective action and spiritual commitment, both endowing the deed with a higher meaning and deriving its essence from the experience of combat; now that they had been provided with such an ideology, they were not likely to take it lightly.³³¹

More significant in the long run was the infiltration of Nazi-oriented younger officers into the lower ranks. The very speed which the Nazis demanded in the expansion of the army made it difficult, as Beck and others saw it would, for the army to digest its new recruits and indoctrinate them in the code of the corps. The newer officers were frequently graduates of Nazi youth organizations. Although in the early years of the regime, the army tried to curb the influx of subalterns from this source, the need for leaders eventually forced it to give in. Consequently, a marked difference in outlook rose between the junior and the senior ranks, and by World War II the latter could not be sure of the obedience of their ideologically oriented subordinates if they ordered a military move against Hitler.³³²

I. NAZIFICATION OF THE ARMY

Upon Hitler's ascension to power, the French ambassador to Germany, Andre Francois-Poncet noted:

³²⁹ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 31

³³⁰ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 31

³³¹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 127

³³² Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 120; Quoting Schlabrendorff, *They Almost Killed Hitler*, 39-40

Two institutions, the German army and National Socialist party found themselves face to face...the question was, who would gain the upper hand in the new German state, the party or the army.³³³

Hitler, upon assumption of power, realized his position was still extremely tenuous; he deftly positioned himself in favor of long standing army beliefs and reinforced the army's desired position of a separate 'state within the state' through words and action.

Hitler followed during his first few months of power...a policy of friendly gestures and marks of favor in order to win over the manifestly skeptical generals. It was in line with the flood of lip service to nationalism, tradition, the Prussian spirit, ostentatious displays of respect for the person of the Reich President...and all those concepts which went with a conservative idea of the state.³³⁴

Hitler guaranteed rearmament and the new government immediately began to fulfill this promise. Little more was required to convince the officers that the new government was good for them and thus good for Germany.³³⁵

To the gratification of the officers, a new army law of 20 July 1933 abolished the jurisdiction of the civil courts over the military and did away with the system of elected representatives of the rank and file; the *Vertrauensmänner* whose very existence recalled the soldiers councils of 1918.³³⁶

Hitler went out of his way to express his respect for the traditions of the officer corps and his determination that its honorable place in the state should be maintained.³³⁷

Although he [Hitler] did not actually remove them at once, he nevertheless radically undermined the suspicions of the military leaders, which were in any case halfhearted, proved him once more a master of psychological calculation. He not only promised them the rearming of the *Wehrmacht*, the 'steeling of youth and the strengthening of the will to defense by all

³³³ Klaus-Jürgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 16

³³⁴ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 237

³³⁵ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy*, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945, 565

³³⁶ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 471

³³⁷ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 470

possible means'...but in addition presented his own counter demands in such a way that they merely seemed to fulfill the wishes of the Reichswehr.³³⁸

Additionally, the Nazis and the army struck an unofficial agreement that resulted in a mutually beneficial relationship for both. In the army's eyes this agreement seemed to guarantee support for their aims and solidify their much sought after role/position within German society. Thus, a 'deal with the devil' was struck that the army was intent on keeping and the Nazis under Hitler, only as long as it remained pertinent to their ultimate goal, and then they would undermine the army. Hitler, in exchange, would become a strong proponent for rearmament and would demonstrate their commitment by removing a threat to the *Reichswehr* dominance of military affairs.³³⁹

The consolidation of power by the Nazis depended upon an informal understanding with the military. The latter would withdraw from politics, leave this field to the Nazis, and in return the Nazis would push an expanded rearmament program and guarantee the army a monopoly of the military function and autonomy within its own sphere.³⁴⁰

These actions greatly influenced many within the senior leadership who viewed the Nazis as being able to deliver two crucial goals that had eluded the post-war army, an authoritarian government, and the support of the masses. These two conditions, along with Hitler's 'twin pillars' concept seemed to secure the military's place in society and the reestablishment of the military's "quasi-autonomous political power."³⁴¹

The new regime appeared to promise what the old elites no longer felt capable of achieving alone: the nationalist integration of the overwhelming majority of the nation and the suppression of the rest.³⁴²

This arrangement received explicit sanction in the spring of 1934 when the army agreed to support Hitler for President; Hitler acquiesced in the

³³⁸ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 237

³³⁹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 113

³⁴⁰ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 113

³⁴¹ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 31

³⁴² Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 30

suppression of Ernst Rohm and the S.A., who had dreams of replacing the *Reichswehr* with a mass, ideologically oriented, people's army.³⁴³

Hitler's skillful maneuvering succeeded in pacifying the fears of many within the army's senior leadership. The prevailing views of Hitler's relationship and benefit among the leadership of the army soon divided into opposing camps. These conflicting views were best represented in the views of Werner Freiherr von Fritsch and Walther von Reichenau.³⁴⁴

General von Fritsch represented the 'old school,' pre-war Prussian aristocratic values grounded in pre-industrial feudalism. He viewed himself as intermediary between past and the future of the army. He attempted to "build on the sure foundations of the past and adapting to the changed spirit of the times."³⁴⁵

Fritsch issued a string of orders and directives in which he combined an affirmation of loyalty to the new regime with a stress on the tested values of Prussian tradition.³⁴⁶

Fritsch believed strongly in the Hitler's 'twin pillars' approach and viewed the military cooperation and the formation of a National Socialist state as

an alliance of old and new in which it was incumbent on the army to represent the standpoint and values of the traditional elite.³⁴⁷

[The] armed forces command was, on the other hand, of the opinion that the world had changed and that the old elite would have to modify its values if it wanted to survive. Werner Eduard Fritz von Blomberg and especially Reichenau thought more dynamically but also more unscrupulously. Fritsch and his followers were representative of a continuity of old feudal values in a changed environment, whereas his opponents in the military embodied rather the continuity in military power politics.³⁴⁸

³⁴³ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 113

³⁴⁴ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁴⁵ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 31

³⁴⁶ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁴⁷ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁴⁸ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 34

Reichenau, (who would become Hitler's most political general)³⁴⁹, along with members of the armed forces command (*Wehrmachtführung*), disagreed with the approach of the more conservative officers lead by Fritsch. They

saw new balance of power and socio-political change as so profound and irreversible that they went beyond the claims of the old values and the tested 'sure foundations of the past'.³⁵⁰

Through Reichswehr Minister Blomberg and his closest adviser, von Reichenau...[Hitler had found] two partners who followed his course almost unconditionally.³⁵¹

These men lead by Reichenau and Blomberg were in favor of alliance and collaboration with the Nazi's and had little use for

traditional values and practices if that was the only way in which the military elite could be assured of a decisive influence in the new regime.³⁵²

[They] had no scruples about sacrificing the holiest cows of Prussian tradition when it was necessary to preserve or strengthen the army's political power.³⁵³

National Socialism was not to him [Reichenau] any more than anything else, a matter of inner conviction, but the ideology of a political mass movement whose revolutionary élan he planned to harness, and at the right moment tame, to further both his career and the interest of the army.³⁵⁴

Men who shared the same views as Reichenau and Blomberg (Wilhelm Keitel, Alfred Jodl and Walther von Brauchitsch) soon came to dominate key positions within the high command. The overriding characteristic of these men was there quest for power and willingness to sacrifice tradition in their rush to embrace Nazi ideology for personal and military glory. These men were blind to the true nature and ultimate goal of National Socialism and its impending plans for ideologically restructuring the military.

³⁴⁹ Robert Wistrich, *Who's who in Nazi Germany*, 240

³⁵⁰ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁵¹ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 238

³⁵² Klaus-Jurgen Muller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁵³ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁵⁴ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 238

The Nazis were not content merely to eliminate the authority of the officer corps. It was even more necessary to alter its fundamental character, to destroy it as an autonomous group positing its own values and goals.³⁵⁵

Reichenau and his political adviser strove to make the army not merely an integral part of the new regime but equal partner of the party, with scant regard to traditional values.³⁵⁶

Reichenau, when commenting on the alliance between the army and National Socialism, coined the slogan “into the new state, so as to maintain the position which is our due.”³⁵⁷

Therefore, the senior leadership in an attempt to retain its privileged political status, which in turn preserved its professionalism, embraced the alliance with the Nazi's in order to return Germany to their pre-war status as a European hegemon. Hitler recognized this and cleverly parlayed the ‘two pillars theory’, while deftly manipulating those in power who he had not yet won over or eliminated. This insured the military's neutrality as he proceeded to eliminate political opposition; including former general Schleicher and other numerous high-ranking officers. He consolidated his power for the day he would move against the generals by applying similar methods previously used against other segments of German society (*Gleichschaltung*).³⁵⁸

This is reason why the army looked on complaisantly, while the Nazis brutally crushed all opposition to the regime.³⁵⁹

The domestic political conditions for the realization of the foreign policy objective of a great power appeared to have been met. It was for these reasons that the leaders of the new *Reichswehr* supported Hitler in the consolidation of the new regime. They looked on ‘neutrally’; i.e., supportively, as he first suppressed the left, then eliminated the bourgeois parties, centralized the political and administrative structure of the Reich and so appeared to realize the political ideal of an authoritarian, centralized state.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁵ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 119

³⁵⁶ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 33

³⁵⁷ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 32

³⁵⁸ Geoffrey P. Megargee, *Inside Hitler's High Command*, 28

³⁵⁹ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 10

³⁶⁰ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 31

Military leadership identified with national socialist on the object of foreign policy, that of attaining a position of hegemony for the Reich in Europe.³⁶¹

The former group represented by Fritsch and Beck saw their ability to confront Hitler severely limited, and upon the death of their leading advocate President Hindenburg, “who alone represented the state which the *Reichswehr* served,”³⁶² were never able to recover when Hitler combined the offices of chancellor and president.

The military’s elite’s position was weakened disastrously by Hitler’s accumulation of powerful political functions such as his assumption, upon Hindenburg’s death, of the presidency of the Reich, a role crucial to the army.³⁶³

In addition, neutral officers who had tried to remain outside the political fray tended to identify increasingly with the beliefs and goals of Hitler.

Significantly, even officers with little reason to be enamored of Hitler and his regime often shared many of the Fuhrer’s prejudices, or what they preferred to call his *Feindbild*, despite the obvious fact that many of their perceived ‘enemies’ hardly constituted an objective threat to the Reich.³⁶⁴

With the combining of the offices of president and chancellor and his assumption of overall political power, Hitler now had the means to fulfill his ideological goals. This would require the right leadership, his leadership (*Fuhrerprinzip*).

Leadership was more important the higher any particular fascist movement rose. It became vital for any serious attempt to take power.³⁶⁵

The ultimate aim was the conversion of the nation into a socially coordinated and politically homogenous mass that acknowledged only one single will--the will of the leader and only one moral value: the nation.³⁶⁶

By assuming political power, Hitler could then replace the old class system with a new integrated system with ties to “Fuhrer, Volk, army and race.”³⁶⁷

³⁶¹ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 38

³⁶² Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 237

³⁶³ Klaus-Jurgen Müller, *The Army, Politics and Society in Germany, 1933-45*, 34

³⁶⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER’S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 127

³⁶⁵ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 492

³⁶⁶ Hagen Schulze, *States, Nations and Nationalism*, 293

³⁶⁷ Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism 1914-1945*, 194

J. THE WAR YEARS, NAZI CONSOLIDATION OF THE MILITARY 1938-1945

The social metamorphosis of the armed forces worked by the Nazis proved equally significant for the fate of military tradition as a political force, rendering its meaning increasingly problematic. The homogeneous cadre of Seeckt's *Reichswehr* was dwarfed by the sixteen million strong Wehrmacht at the height of the war, the true nation in arms desired by the Prussian reformers of the early nineteenth century. It was a people's army filled with men from social groups that the bearers of military tradition had long excluded.³⁶⁸

Over the previous five years, and due in large part to political and foreign policy success, Hitler had systematically removed senior officers and consolidated his authority in the *Wehrmacht*; and in 1938, dismissed Brauchitsch and assumed direct command over the army.

The establishment of firm professional control over the army as the main military service was the most important outcome of the first year of Nazi rule.³⁶⁹

It was at...the beginning of 1938 after the integrity of the officer corps had been sapped and its will to resistance weakened, that he [Hitler] threw aside the façade and, in a series of swift and brutal maneuvers, arrogated to himself personal command over the armed forces.³⁷⁰

Every fresh success distorted his vision still further, until finally he felt himself infinitely superior to the despised generals. 'This little affair of operational command is something that anybody can do.[Hitler]'³⁷¹

Central to his ideology was the reversal of the 'unpolitical soldier', which had characteristically represented the German military up until that time.

As early as 1934, he [Hitler] told an interviewer that in his opinion, there was 'absolutely no room for the unpolitical man.'³⁷²

³⁶⁸ Donald Abenheim, *Reforging the Iron Cross: The Search for Tradition in the West German Armed Forces*, 36

³⁶⁹ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 567

³⁷⁰ Gordon Craig, *The Politics of the Prussian Army*, 469

³⁷¹ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 54

³⁷² Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 240

Therefore, it was with this goal in mind that when the opportunity presented itself and feeling quite secure in his dictatorial position--that he justified his assumption of army command to further indoctrinate the *Wehrmacht* in order to facilitate his expansionist aims.

‘It is the task of the Supreme Commander of the Army to educate the Army in a National Socialist sense. I know no Army general capable of doing this. Therefore, I have decided to assume supreme command of the Army myself.’³⁷³

The public and military sentiment in Germany during the late 1930s in regards to war was quite different than the emotion of ‘August days’. The former still vividly remembered the bitter sacrifices of that period, while the latter felt the country was not economically and material prepared for the undertaking.

The mood of the nation during the Sudetenland crisis...[displayed] ‘no enthusiasm whatsoever for entanglement in war, morale was widely depressed’ and there was an ‘overall general war-psychosis’³⁷⁴

Hitler’s adroit maneuvering--first politically and then militarily--delivered victories that far exceeded the expectations of even the most optimistic proponents of his policies. This unimaginable success characterized the years 1938 to 1940, when against all advice from his generals, Hitler embarked on what seemed to be a reckless policy of confrontation and foreign aggression, only to emerge with greater victories on each successive occasion.

The great military triumphs in the first two years of the war dispelled much of the gloom.³⁷⁵

These early triumphs elevated Hitler even further, attaining the status of not only a godlike figure, but a military genius in the eyes of the masses and, up until then doubting members of the military. Early successes allowed Hitler to progressively strengthen his administration of the military, increasing his intervention as the war proceeded.

³⁷³ Joachim C. Fest, *The Face of The Third Reich*, 240: Quoting Adolf Hitler in remark to Halder, *Bor, Gesprache mit Halder Domarus*, Hitler, Vol. I.

³⁷⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER’S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 179

³⁷⁵ Omer Bartov, *HITLER’S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 180

Once the Munich accords were signed, the public mood rapidly changed into one of admiration for the Fuhrer's 'political skill.'³⁷⁶

Their conviction in Hitler's ideological arguments grew, following their triumphs in Poland and the West.³⁷⁷

The great victories in the West led to increasing adulation of Hitler and consequently to a growing agreement with his 'ideas.'³⁷⁸

National pride in Germany's military achievements combined with hopes for unprecedented prosperity from which everyone would gain.³⁷⁹

Hitler first began to intervene in the preparation of military plans in the fall of 1938. Once the war was on, however, and particularly after it began to go badly for Germany, Hitler extended his range of decision down to the most detailed tactical level.³⁸⁰

Thus, the next phase of Hitler's domination of the *Wehrmacht* and its adherence to the ideological goals set forth by National Socialism, more specifically those required for foreign conquest to satisfy the aims of 'race and space', were initiated. Over the next several years, incoming members of the *Wehrmacht* who had been youngsters when Hitler assumed power in 1933 and had been influenced by the rampant nationalism of National Socialism since grade school possessed a greater doctrinal foundation.

[the] struggles between two currents of strategy, one aiming at the reconstruction of unifying principles and the other at a new practice of war. By, 1942 a radically different notion of strategy and a transformed officer corps had come into existence. The unified approach to German strategy devolved into two directions, the management of arms on the one hand and ideological "strategy" on the other.³⁸¹

A majority of new conscripts had spent several years absorbing fascist indoctrination in the Hitler Youth. What remained to be accomplished was the

³⁷⁶ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 179

³⁷⁷ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 128

³⁷⁸ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 149

³⁷⁹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 180

³⁸⁰ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 119

³⁸¹ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 528

reinforcement through military propaganda of extreme xenophobic and racist dogmas served to these youngsters on a daily basis in preparation for the upcoming war in the East.

Thus, the fighting spearhead of the Third Reich was composed of men who had spent the formative year of their youth under National Socialism. This was of particular importance because the regime was first and foremost concerned with indoctrinating Germany's young generation, both in the official educational system and especially within the ranks of the *Hitlerjugend* and the *Arbeitsdienst*.³⁸²

Exposed to the influence of these new and still attractive institutions at a highly impressionable age, there is little doubt that the youths who were to become the *Wehrmacht*'s combat troops, were to a large extent, molded in the spirit of Nazism and prepared for the kind of war the regime was determined to wage.³⁸³

In June of 1941, Hitler, after failing in the battle of Britain, turned his armies eastward for the culmination of his long held ideological battle against 'Judeo-Bolshevism and 'Asiatic barbarism.' Hitler's unprecedented initial success against the West allowed crucial time for the intense ideological indoctrination of the *Wehrmacht* that was required for the brutal and barbaric war that would come to represent the Eastern Campaign. Ideological indoctrination was to play a more vital role in the war in the east than it had in the West.

Ideology did play a lesser role in the conquest and occupation of Western Europe.³⁸⁴

In preparation for the impending war in the East, propaganda was radically intensified with the continued consolidation of National Socialism fascist ideology into the *Wehrmacht* as the primary goal.

The Party is the carrier of the spiritual and the mental preparation for the present mighty task of our people.³⁸⁵

Stereotypical views of the enemy [were] pumped into every German youth and soldier.³⁸⁶

³⁸² Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 108

³⁸³ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 109

³⁸⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 136

³⁸⁵ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 123

A deep ideological and racial abyss separated us from Russia; the aim must be to destroy European Russia.³⁸⁷

Indoctrinations thus served the double purpose of strongly motivating the troops and greatly brutalizing them, for it legitimized both one's own sacrifices and the atrocities committed against the enemy.³⁸⁸

The indoctrination of the soldiers was of crucial importance in two related ways. First, it taught the troops totally to trust Hitler's political and military wisdom, and never to doubt either the morality of his orders or the outcome of his prophecies. Second, it provided the soldiers with an image of the enemy which so profoundly distorted their perception that once confronted with reality, they invariably experienced it as a confirmation of what they had come to expect.³⁸⁹

National Socialist war was war for the sake of social reconstruction through the destruction of conquered societies.³⁹⁰

After initial pre-invasion indoctrination, the army on the Eastern Front was subjected to compulsory programming which increased during each of three significant phases; initial success, stalemate, and retreat. During the first phase of the invasion, while things were progressing rapidly, army leadership felt the soldiers of the *Wehrmacht* were 'still showing too much compassion for the enemy' and thus, implemented increased attempts to indoctrinate soldiers through the use of propaganda. A message delivered by Colonel-General Herman von Hoth to his troops typifies the effort to intensify the troops participation in the 'brutalities deemed essential for the victorious outcome of this 'war of ideologies.'"³⁹¹

More than ever, we are filled with the thought of a new era in which the strength of the German peoples' racial superiority...and recognize our mission to save European culture from the advancing Asiatic barbarism. This battle can only end with the destruction of one or the other; a compromise is out of the question.³⁹²

³⁸⁶ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 112

³⁸⁷ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 128

³⁸⁸ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 118

³⁸⁹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 118

³⁹⁰ Michael Geyer, *Makers of Modern Strategy, German Strategy in the Age of Machine Warfare, 1914-1945*, 566

³⁹¹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 130

³⁹² Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 131

In the east, the soldier is not only a fighter according to the rules of warfare, but also a carrier of an inexorable racial conception [*völkischen Idee*] and the avenger of all the bestialities which have been committed against the Germans and related races. The soldier must have complete understanding for the necessity of the harsh but just atonement of Jewish subhumanity.³⁹³

This initial success served to verify Nazi concepts of racial inferiority and the superior ability of German military might. Once again, Hitler's bold leadership had seemed to fulfill the destiny of German imperialism dating back to the previous century.

The retreat of the Soviet Union made possible the formation of a German dominated *Mitteleuropa*, a concept which can be traced back all the way to the original unification of Germany, if not indeed to the aspirations of German nationalist from the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁹⁴

However, after initial success, the campaign stalemated; the five month battle of Stalingrad is historically viewed as the turning point from offensive to defensive warfare. During this period, the military introduced 'educational officers' and intensified their propaganda directed towards the troops in an attempt to increase the fighting capacity and ability of the army.

The propagandistic reinterpretation of the disaster [of Stalingrad was] a powerful rallying point for even greater sacrifices. Thus, the soldiers progressively retreated to an unreal, mystical, nihilistic world.³⁹⁵

The *Wehrmacht* reacted to Soviet resistance by calls for a further 'fanaticization' of its own troops by means of intensified indoctrination, and demanded even more 'ruthlessness' than previously, merely justified the claim that this was indeed a 'war of ideologies' where everything was allowed to achieve final victory.³⁹⁶

The *Wehrmacht* was well aware of the powerful need for belief among soldiers living in conditions of constant danger, and catered to it with an endless stream of leaflets, brochures, speeches, radio talks...and all other forms of propaganda directed at the troops throughout the war.³⁹⁷

³⁹³ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 129

³⁹⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 177

³⁹⁵ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 168

³⁹⁶ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 154

³⁹⁷ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 120

After the defeat at Stalingrad, the Eastern campaign degenerated into a life or death struggle for the German nation and propaganda was again intensified to increase frantic levels. The ensuing belief in the regime's propaganda kept the *Wehrmacht* fighting even after "their units disintegrated and military discipline broke down."³⁹⁸

In 1943, political indoctrination officers (National *Socialistische Führungsoffiziere* NSFO) were introduced into the armed forces. These officers were modeled upon the Russian political commissars and had a chain of command independent of the military hierarchy.³⁹⁹

The tone of the army's propaganda change from ecstatic to frantic, often verging on the hysterical; technology and skill were now to be increasingly replaced by devotion and fanaticism, rational thought by 'blind belief.' Commanders were charged with instilling into the men, a new ideological fervor with which to combat the enemy's superior numbers and machines, as well as the Red Army's own apparent ideological motivation.⁴⁰⁰

The *Wehrmacht's* propaganda made a conscious and concerted effort to associate Hitler with God, to present 'his mission' as emanating from a divine will, and to tie his personal fate with that of the German Volk, indeed with the destiny of; Western civilization' as a whole.⁴⁰¹

The *Wehrmacht's* propaganda thus fed the troops with an ever heavier diet of religious images, portraying Hitler and the Nazi creed as God's instruments charged with protecting German culture and blood, and communism as Satan's servant, unleashed from hell to destroy civilization.⁴⁰²

It was fear of vengeance for the *Wehrmacht's* barbarities which made this propaganda so effective.⁴⁰³

Letters home from the Eastern front illustrated the effect of propaganda upon the troops and the continued successful ideological indoctrination required by the bitter struggle.

³⁹⁸ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 144

³⁹⁹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 118

⁴⁰⁰ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 123

⁴⁰¹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 120

⁴⁰² Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 124

⁴⁰³ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 124

The soldiers letters reflected the distortion of reality among the troops in two significant spheres: first the dehumanization and demonization of the enemy on political and racial grounds, with a particular reference to the Jews as the lowest expression of human depravity; and, second, the deification of the Fuhrer as the only hope for Germany's salvation. [They] regarded battle as a supreme test of character and manhood, as well as of racial and cultural superiority and a view of the war as a holy crusade.⁴⁰⁴

As the fortunes of the Ostheer rapidly deteriorated, the troops 'belief' in Hitler did not falter, but rather increased in direct proportion to the hopelessness of the situation.⁴⁰⁵

For the troops at the front were the firmest of Hitler's followers, and the least cynical about his ideology.⁴⁰⁶

Increasingly during the last two years of the war, the troops at the front came to see themselves as the missionaries of the entire German nation, indeed of Western civilization as a whole.⁴⁰⁷

The need of soldiers under constant danger of death for some kind spiritual support, provided in the *Wehrmacht* first and foremost by a quasi-religious belief in Hitler, was thus powerfully demonstrated in this period of profound military and psychological crisis.⁴⁰⁸

Toward the end of the war, when the objective situation became evidently hopeless, combat formations intensified their indoctrinational efforts even more in a desperate attempt to make up for their material weakness.⁴⁰⁹

Nowhere was union of National Socialism and army ideals emphasized more than on the Eastern Front. What had initially begun as a war to obtain Lebensraum, had over time, disintegrated into a war of genocide. In order to stiffen the resolve of the front line soldiers, who bore the brunt of an increasingly precarious situation, the army leadership embarked upon an accelerated program of Nazification that only intensified in the last phase of the war. The battle on the eastern front was the fruition of National Socialism ideology of race war and the course of civil-military relations since the start of the 20th century, if not before.

⁴⁰⁴ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 153

⁴⁰⁵ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 166

⁴⁰⁶ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 169

⁴⁰⁷ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 169

⁴⁰⁸ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 171

⁴⁰⁹ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 134

This accelerating process of radicalization, visible at all levels of the Ostheer, reflected the true essence, not only of the war in the East, but also of the army as a whole, for In the Soviet Union the *Wehrmacht* finally became Hitler's army in every sense of the term.⁴¹⁰

⁴¹⁰ Omer Bartov, *HITLER'S ARMY: Soldiers, Nazis, and war in the Third Reich*, 73

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V. CONCLUSION

The failure of Prussian-German army to undergo democratic civil-military reform during the sweeping political and social changes of the 19th century created conditions in the 20th century in which the military embraced National Socialism in order to preserve its privilege position within the state. This study has illustrated significant episodes from 1806-1944 where civilian oversight and democratic control over the military were possible, but liberal and democratic forces failed to implement significant and lasting reform, resulting in the military caste becoming further entrenched in the self preservation of the 'old status quo.' The simultaneous social and political evolution of the 19th century resulted in the emergence of radical nationalism that coalesced prior to the First World War. These contributing factors were galvanized by the political and economic carnage of post-World War I central Europe. The interwar period and its chaos provided the breeding ground for National Socialism to appeal to diverse segments of the German population. In turn, the German army, increasingly out of touch with the population attempted to co-opt the popularity of right-wing National Socialism to bind itself to the people. The failure of liberal and democratic forces to integrate the military into constitutional mechanisms led to the horrific carnage and the subsequent catastrophe known as World War II. This study illustrated the relationship of the soldier and the state in the darkest period of modern history

Perhaps the events described in the preceding study have only an antiquarian interest, and some skeptics may suggest that the record of the past in a distant place has nothing to say to the present. Such an impression is mistaken, however. The failure of liberal and pluralistic forces to enact sensible oversight over matters of policy, strategy and military affairs can have disastrous implications for more than merely national life. The story of Germany's misfortune in modern history contains within it the central failures of constitutional controls on military power, and radical nationalists and soldiers exploiting the forces of total war in society and the international system with catastrophic results. Thus stands the warning of the record of German arms and policy for all those

who wish to think soberly about the problems of force and statecraft, that is, the danger when ideology trumps the sound formation of strategy and destroys constitutional checks and balances.

No other officer corps achieved such high standards of professionalism, and the officer corps of no other major power was in the end so completely prostituted. Each chapter of the German story has its lesson and its warning. The imperial experience shows the benefits of civilian control. The republican period demonstrates the difficulty of achieving that control amidst political chaos. World War I illustrates the disastrous results when military men assume political roles. Nazi rule illustrates the equally catastrophic results when military warnings are unheeded and political leaders ride roughshod over the soldiers. The variety of German civil-military relations makes its history a terrifying but highly instructive study.⁴¹¹

⁴¹¹ Samuel P Huntington, *The Soldier And The State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, 98

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